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PIERRE AND JOSEPH

Pierre & Joseph

By René Bazin

Translated by Frank Hunter Potter

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PIERRE AND JOSEPH

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PIERRE AND JOSEPH

PIERRE AND JOSEPH

I

THE TWO ROADS

NEVER had there been such deep peace in Alsace as at the end of that day and in that valley; never had the hearts of men so refused to receive it; never, either, since he had ruled at Baerenhof—that is, during the eight years since his father's death, had Victor Reinhardt, the master of the finest wheat-fields in the valley, which has but few of them, been seen to leave the workmen, his neighbors and friends, to finish the reaping alone by themselves.

That morning a little girl had been born in the farm-house with the long roofs which sheltered it, like hoods, against snow and wind, and which is built on a plateau of arable land south of the town of Masevaux. She was born to be tried, like all other creatures, by toil and sorrow, but also to praise God. And that is why the people about her, while not realizing clearly the marvel which they were celebrating, sent the women to congratulate the young mother, Anne-Marie, whom

many of them called, in the Alsatian dialect, Amarei. They went up the earthen steps, inclosed and held in place by pine logs; they went in, prowled for a moment about this new thing, tried to see these eyes, less than a day old, which had not yet been touched by any shadow, spoke low, all in the same way, then went out, pleased, because this birth had stirred the maternal feeling in them, and because Anne-Marie, pale in her bed beside the cradle, had greeted each of them with a nod. Outside, the golden light enfolded them, concentrated, reflected from every side, crushed down between the mountains as in a wine-press. In the sky, white clouds were sailing along very high. There was nothing to fear from the weather. But from Man? Oh, how anxious they were! They cast a glance at the reapers, who never stopped their work, for the master, that sturdy Victor Reinhardt, had said, as he threw down his scythe: "Make haste while I go for news. Nobody can tell whether we shall have any men left to-morrow." They looked at this field of standing grain, which began at their feet, from the very walls of the house, and stretched back toward Mount Südel. Then they walked down the path from the plateau, passed the walls of the Ehrsam factory, regained the road opposite the cemetery, and re-entered Masevaux.

Toward half past five o'clock a tall, well-made woman, very simply dressed, left the dwelling-house in the factory inclosure and, passing before

the porter's lodge, went up the hill to visit the young mother, her nearest neighbor. She wore a mourning bonnet, fastened by strings around a face which was almost young, of which it could be said that the nose was a little too short, the lips a little too full, the chin a little too strong, but which had a beauty of the other sort—that of an intelligent look, of a kind, even trusting smile, which neither grief nor the weariness of life had worn away. She carried in her hand a bag of varnished leather which bulged with a parcel. Not being concerned about the fields, but always deeply interested in the present and future of children, as so many mothers are, and paying little attention to out-of-doors life, she saw neither the reapers nor the mountains which encircle Masevaux, wooded from their tops to the pastures and orchards on their sides, nor the town with its tile roofs, which begins to be visible when one arrives at the threshold of Baerenhof. But when she reached the plateau before the farm she pushed the door open, passed through the kitchen where some old gossips were assembled, and, entering the room at the back, came up to the large bed of massive cherry wood where Anne-Marie Reinhardt lay with half-closed eyes.

"Oh, Madame Ehrsam, I was expecting you."

"You see, Marie, I have come."

The voice replied, more weakly, "I did not tell the others about my suffering; it is great."

"But you have a pretty baby. She looks like

you. She will be blond, like you and like my Joseph."

"Will she ever know her father?"

"Why not?"

"Don't you know anything?"

"No, I have been at home, as usual. My sons are in the factory."

"You think that they are there?"

"Where else should they be?"

"And I thought that you would tell me what to believe! Listen!"

Madame Ehrsam leaned over, and Anne-Marie slowly turned her head toward her.

"They say that war will be declared."

"When?"

"To-morrow, this evening, right away. One hears it everywhere. Victor went away two hours ago and has not come back. That is a bad sign. Your sons, Madame Ehrsam, are like my husband, young men who are going to fight. Oh, how unhappy I am!"

Worn out, the mistress of Baerenhof turned away her head. Two tears ran from her eyelids. A shuffling footstep approached the door. An inquisitive woman passed her head through the opening.

"Do you want anything, Marie?"

"Only peace!"

Madame Ehrsam drew from her bag a fat, woolly parcel from which there escaped here and there the ends of blue ribbons.

"I have knitted a bodice, some caps, and some socks for your daughter, and I forbid you to undo the package. Your old women can do that when I am gone. I should like to say to you—rest! But you belong to this country which has had no rest for more than a hundred years, my poor girl, and no doubt much longer. I can only wish you courage. It is our motto, as it is that of the men of the country. Tell me, if war is declared, what will your Victor do? Do you know?"

"He has not told me anything."

"But you know all the same?"

"He will do what your sons will do."

"You think so?"

"They are all alike. And the young men, who never knew the French days, are madder than the old ones."

The two women remained silent for a minute, looking at each other with beating hearts.

"Above all, don't say a word to any one, Madame Ehrsam! If the Schwobs suspected!"

The visitor did not reply. What was the need between Alsatians? They were accustomed never to speak aloud of serious matters—that is to say, of the smallest events in life—and to put their trust in few people.

"Don't worry until you know, Marie. I must go home and find my sons. Perhaps they will tell me that these rumors are false, as so many have been. Do you remember?"

"No, madame, no! My heart is too heavy.

There is a place already prepared in it for the misfortune which is coming."

"I will come back."

"Good-by."

Madame Ehrsam started to return to the factory. She passed quickly before the porter's lodge, where she was accustomed to stop and talk, if only for a few minutes, from charity, to the crippled mother of Antoine Kuhn. She lifted her skirt to step across a little canal of running water, forty centimeters wide, which crossed the factory grounds from one end to the other, and entered her house, which was built in the highest part of the inclosure, a little distance from the boundary wall, and which was, to tell the truth, only the first of a whole series of buildings, workshops, storehouses, offices, buildings for steam-engines, ranged in lines along the declivity, separated from one another by only a few meters, and which ran down to the spot where the road from Rougemont takes the name of Porte St.-Martin. The house, like several of the other buildings, dated from the end of the eighteenth century. It had no beauty but its tall, wide windows, framed in the red stone of Ruffach, and which still held up to the light panes of greenish glass of the old days. A poor, dusty ivy-plant, facing the north, climbed on the two corners. There was a niche above the door without any saint in it. The door itself, thick as a partition and made of heart of oak, complained at having

still to work after a century and a half. It opened only with the noise of a cannonade, which was followed by a deep shudder of all the wood and all the ironwork. Madame Ehrsam opened it and called:

"Anna!"

A servant replied from the landing above, "Madame!"

"Have my sons come in?"

"I saw M. Pierre go out about four o'clock, but I think that M. Joseph is still in the factory."

The mother ascended the stairs and went into the workroom, over the front door, of her son Pierre, who was the chief of the firm, the master of outside relations, the principal buyer of cotton. Though he had little aptitude for directing repairs on the machinery or arranging regulations, he was skilful in smoothing over working difficulties. He negotiated with the employees and the workmen of the factory, he represented the firm in the meetings held by the spinners or weavers of cotton at Masevaux or elsewhere. The younger brother was more particularly engaged in the material life of the factory, with the accounts or the purchase and upkeep of the machinery.

The room, provided with modern furniture, in brown oak—a table with drawers, two chairs, two easy-chairs covered with red rep—had no decoration save the photograph of the father of the two young men, that intelligent and patriotic Louis Pierre Ehrsam whom all the valley of the

Doller had known and loved, a veteran of the war of 1870, who had changed under the German rule neither the shape of his beard—a heavy imperial—nor the habit of speaking French at home and abroad, as was done by many of the Alsatians of this valley, less tyrannically governed than the inhabitants of the little towns in the plains. On every opportunity he eagerly expressed for France a sort of uncompromising, rough affection which never failed. The proof of this is still famous through the whole of Alsace. They tell it sitting about the stove in the evenings. The duty of preserving the cotton-mills handed down from father to son for three generations had not permitted Louis Pierre Ehrsam, after the war, to choose French citizenship. He could not leave this family heritage, these workmen, this valley. Perhaps, too, the manufacturer may have thought that he would be doing a great service by remaining a Frenchman in this annexed Alsace. However that might be, he had not gone to live in France; he had been able to do what others, with less self-control, had been incapable of enduring—to live forty years under the Prussian rule. Though he was classed from the outset as an enemy of Germany, and had been under suspicion more than once, they had never been able to implicate him in one of those affairs which often recalled the fact, up to the outbreak of the war, that Alsace, though conquered, was not resigned.

When he died in 1910 they found in the drawer of his work-table—that same oak table which the hand of Madame Ehrsam was at that moment touching—an envelope bearing this direction, "Will to be opened by my dear wife." The envelope had been opened, and on a folded sheet of paper they read these simple words: "This is my will, and my last wish. I ask that they place beneath my head, in my coffin, a pillow filled with the soil of France." They went secretly to get a little earth from the territory of Rougemont, and the Alsatian slept in the cemetery of Masevaux with his head lying on a mound of French soil which had never been subjected to German rule.

The photograph, hung near the window to the left of the desk, represented a man of forty—the age which he had reached when he married as his second wife Sophie Riffel—with broad face and shoulders, a thick and prominent nose, firm lips, very light eyes whose eyelids cannot have winked frequently. It was a face in which will predominated, and honesty. Something of the look of his grandfather, the master weaver who had founded the factory, lived again in this portrait of the father of Pierre and Joseph.

The family was a very old one. The registers at Masevaux attested that the Ehrsams had figured among the leading men of the corporation during the centuries when the town was girt with ramparts, a very rich and a very free town,

where the supremacy belonged by turns to the elected bourgeois or to the chapter of noble canonesses of St.-Léger, which old Duke Maso had endowed in 728, and which brought so many lawsuits in the following centuries. Those were far-off days, in which the individualistic, obstinate, and argumentative character of the Alsatian was revealing itself; when every corporation had its guild-house, its seal, its banner, its fortune in florins and lands, its law courts. One can see the Ehrsams inscribed, because of their last wills, on the "books of souls" of the parish of St.-Martin, because of the pious foundations which they had created. They also gave to the hospital and the leper-house. They were old bourgeois, often satisfied with themselves, but rarely with any one else, pugnacious in business, tender at home. They founded a family and increased their fortune. None of them had proved unworthy. The name had retained its ancient standing in the peaceful valley.

The Ehrsams were connected with the city's past in still another manner, for their factory and their house, built near the cemetery, south of the town and a little outside of it, occupied the very spot where the first Gauls had settled, the founders of Masevaux, to whom one day came Christian missionaries from Lyons.

How many tragedies had occurred in Alsace since those distant days! In every one of them one or several Ehrsams had played a rôle, almost

always that of suffering and of beginning life all over again.

And now the family and the factory were threatened again. Madame Ehrsam looked at the photograph; she was standing, asking advice, as though her husband had been there alive, as on the day when they had decided together, husband and wife, the way in which their sons were to be educated. That day, in this same room, she had said: "Our oldest boy has reached an age when we must select a college for him. My heart inclines me to say that I should like to have Pierre, who is so intelligent, educated in France, and after him, Joseph. There are good schools at Nancy, but you understand these matters better than I . . ." She remembered how for a few minutes she had stood, anxious, watching her husband's face. He had come in after the day's work, and now, putting aside every other concern, was sitting with head and eyes lowered, weighing his recollections and all the pros and cons and not saying a word. Finally he got up, looked at her, and said, with that manner which permitted no reply, "Colmar." Then, as he saw his wife deeply moved and making no reply, he kissed her. So the future had been mortgaged. If he had been here now, that husband who took time in making up his mind, but who never repented of the resolutions which he had formed, what would he direct them to do?

She leaned out of the window, hearing a noise

in the inclosure, and saw the working-people going out of the opened gate. They were going along as usual, neither more noisy nor less. Then, as the leaves of the gate closed, she saw only the parallel lines of the factory buildings running down the declivity and the plat of ground, to the right, which her sons, like their father, had reserved for future buildings, a long rectangle, bare, black from the waste of the furnaces, divided into two unequal parts by the bubbling brook, which was confined in a brick channel and fell just outside of the walls into a tributary affluent of the Doller, the little Odile, the Odilienbächle.

In a few minutes a quick step was heard on the stairs. A voice called, "Mamma!"

The door opened and Madame Ehrsam saw her eldest son, Pierre, who looked hard at her before kissing her, asking himself, "How much does she know?" She knew nothing, or so little! She was only anxious. He opened his arms wide, kissed his mother's brow, which was marked with care for his sake, stood back, began to laugh with a frank, boyish laugh and said:

"Why, mamma, what is the matter with you this evening? Why haven't you taken your bonnet off? It is dinner-time."

"Where is Joseph?"

"He came in with me."

"Where have you been?"

"We went into town, mamma. We had to have news. I will tell you about it at dinner."

She, impulsive, swift to sorrow as to joy, took his hand and held it between her own.

"Oh, my children, is it true? What is going to become of us all?"

He turned away, in order not to have to reply, and stood aside at the door.

"Come on, let us have dinner."

She went down, and at the bottom of the staircase found Joseph waiting for her, buttoned up tight in his brown frock-coat, holding up his calm face for his mother to kiss.

The dining-room, on the ground floor of the Ehrsam house, was hung with a bright-red paper imitating felt, and divided into panels by black moldings. Above the stove, which was tall and broad, of Strasbourg porcelain, the old father had arranged the head of a stag killed in the Hartz forest long ago, a stuffed heron, a couple of sparrow-hawks, a wildcat, trophies of the chase regarding which he knew every date, and of which he was not loath to give a detailed account.

The three places were set about a square table. Pierre was opposite his mother, who sat with her back to the fire, as is customary. Each said his "Benedicite," sat down, and began to eat in silence. It had been M. Ehrsam's custom formerly never to speak till he had finished his soup, which may be explained by the appetite of an industrious man who worked more than twelve hours a day. They continued to do the same thing. Besides, Anna was there, a stalwart Alsatian

blonde, with the double plaits of hair rolled into a coil, and of so bright a golden color that the eye involuntarily turned to them as to a reflection in a mirror—Anna, who was listening and who later was heard laughing in the kitchen.

When the servant had gone Madame Ehrsam asked: "My dear children, will you tell me what has happened to-day? I am almost dead with anxiety."

She looked at them, one after the other. They were two strong men, very unlike each other, examples of those two types of Alsatian which are so often to be met with in the same families.

The elder, Pierre, was tall, slender, with a regular and attractive face, his eyes—dark eyes—full of life, his young mustache curling a little, with teeth often uncovered by mobile lips, sensitive to follow the shades of meaning of a phrase, a true Latin. While Pierre was studying at the College of Colmar, the year that he passed the *Abitur*, the German baccalaureate, his mathematics teacher, a concentrated Prussian, said to him, "Ehrsam, you are the most perfect Latin whom I ever met, and I don't mean that for a compliment, I assure you." Pierre recalled, by the characteristics of both his body and his mind, the ancestors of the Alsatian race who came during the Middle Ages from the province of Franche-Comté, where the blood of Spain and that of France are so well mingled. He had inherited from the South even the glance, swift, eager, and

suspicious, which he cast upon the people with whom he spoke, to be sure that they were listening, then that they were convinced, or at least shaken, that they were not making a jest of him, and that they recognized his superiority. Supple-minded, passionate, a good talker, quick to lose his temper and quick to forgive, clear in his explanations and swift to understand those of other people, with rather a short memory, incapable of bearing a grudge, imaginative to excess, generous without effort and without reflection, he was the opposite of his brother Joseph, a blond young man, with blue eyes, a pointed beard, round shoulders, a stocky, heavily built frame, with a slower mind, who spoke little, but who was truthful to brutality, of an extreme, modest sensitiveness, inconceivably impressionable, obsessed by the richness of a memory which never forgot anything; somewhat awkward in the presence of women, but, everything considered, the most dependable man imaginable. There was no fire in the eyes of the younger brother except when he became angry; then indeed they grew blazing, mad. And this fire lasted for days and weeks, only growing darker.

Pierre and Joseph followed each other at two years' interval on the benches of the college at Colmar. When he came out of the college in 1905 the elder, who planned to go to the bar, spent two years studying law at the University of Strasbourg, and then the year of voluntary

service in the army at Mulheim, on the right bank of the Rhine. He continued his law studies in 1909 and 1910 at Dresden, where he found Joseph, who the previous year had entered the central school, the Technische Hochschule. Pierre had just passed the *Referendar* at the end of 1910 when M. Louis Pierre Ehrsam died suddenly. In order to save the factory Pierre gave up the law. Without hesitation he settled matters with Joseph, who was to join him later and bring to the management of the factory better natural gifts and the knowledge gained at one of the best industrial schools in Germany, and returned to Masevaux. There for the last eighteen months the brothers had been together, and partners in the business. The elder was nearly twenty-seven years old and the younger twenty-five. They had the same ambition—to continue to live in the valley and to develop the factory. The industrial understanding between them was perfect. Each one had his sphere, his jurisdiction, his special authority. For the rest—that is to say, concerning the graver questions and notably their political attitude—as they were absorbed in their work they had few opportunities of explaining their opinions to each other. There had only been skirmishes between them. They knew that they were not wholly of the same opinion, though each was obstinately and resolutely opposed to the German rule.

At this moment, in the silence of the beginning

of the meal, Pierre thought of Joseph and Joseph thought of Pierre, because the moment was coming, had already come, when their two natures would stand face to face, when each would be revealed to the other by the words which must at last be spoken, by the decisions which it would be necessary to take.

The differences between them were so great that they felt them when, for instance, after their father's death, they had thought of buying new machinery. The elder wished to renew everything; the younger, more thrifty, did not believe in taking such heavy chances, the former saying "marvelous invention," the younger saying "perhaps it is a fraud." In the same way they did not accept with equal philosophy the necessary relations with the Germans who had settled in Alsace or were passing through it. Joseph alone, when he was away from Masevaux, would accept invitations to dine with them. At bottom the latter had no more liking for Germany than the former. They had, they thought, judged and measured it. They were of too good Alsatian stock not to feel their own superiority and how inevitable was the animosity between the two races. But facts had a power over the mind of the younger of the Ehrsams to which the elder, so far as he was able, publicly and privately, refused to submit.

The mother, when she had finished her soup, wished to see the speaking and ever-truthful eyes

of her son Pierre, which were hidden from her by a lamp placed in the middle of the table. She leaned to one side, and in the cone of light which fell beneath the shade his face appeared tender and troubled.

"Then you went to town? Where?"

"To the café, mamma."

"You, Pierre? Joseph might go, but you—"

"At the Angel Inn, at the corner of the rue de la Mairie and the rue de la Porte Neuve. Do you remember?"

"Of course."

"And we were not alone, I assure you, in watching who came in to the street and who went out of it. We had sat down near the window, and when the town crier advanced into the middle of the street we got up and followed him."

"What time was that?"

"Five o'clock. He had on his gala uniform, with the two rows of gilt buttons, his saber, his blue helmet with the black border, and of course his little flat drum, which he was beating."

"And what did he announce?"

"Precautionary mobilization."

"It's a lie, Pierre; it's a lie, Joseph. Those people lie all the time. They are mobilizing for war."

The two brothers said at the same time: "That's certain, of course. It means war."

"Against France?"

"Yes, against France."

The great name which was already dividing the whole world into two camps had been pronounced. The whole history of Alsace had been called up by it. It filled the souls of these small-town bourgeois, talking about a table. It counseled them, trained them, made of these simple folk armed principals, combatants.

"Well, children, well?"

Madame Ehrsam waited, still bending to one side, watching the lips of her elder son as if he had been a judge.

Pierre replied, "We are both non-commissioned officers in the German army. You have known that for a long time, mamma. We have to join the regiment."

She became very pale.

"How much time have you?"

"Till to-morrow, at latest. Just think, the active army and the non-commissioned officers. We have to report at Mulheim, on the right bank of the Rhine. Fourteenth Army Corps. There you are!"

Madame Ehrsam rose. She rested her beautiful hands on the table and half closed her eyelids in order the better to keep possession of herself and to recover her courage.

"The second German war in fifty years!"

Then, raising her voice, determined to know, become bolder: "What you have told me is the German order, the military directions. But what are you two going to do? You, Pierre, first."

She began with him because she was less sure of the other.

"Mamma, I shall do what my father would have done."

"Ah! I beg your pardon," said Joseph, violently. "My father did not claim French nationality after the war of 1870. He became—"

"Be silent! Do not speak the word which we do not like here. You know why your father, my husband, did not leave Alsace."

He was silent, but the corner of his mouth was twitching nervously. His eyes, whose tranquil expression had not changed, were fixed on his mother. He was listening, to all appearances, as though he were listening to a business discussion.

"And you also know, Joseph, that that which is forced on any one is not binding; that the heart is not given because the name is written on the registers, and that here all who are honorable in the valley consider themselves French. You were saying, Pierre, that you would not join your regiment?"

There was no reply. The servant opened the door. She noticed the silence and the constraint between the sons and the mother. As she withdrew after placing upon the table a large joint of beef surrounded by potatoes, she looked at her masters—Pierre, who seemed to be dreaming, with his eyes fixed upon the lamp; Joseph, bent over his empty plate and twisting his little yellow

mustache; Madame Ehrsam, leaning back in her chair, her hands folded on her lap, and forgetting to take the big carving knife and fork, as she usually did. In the kitchen a moment later Anna confided to the cook:

"I tell you, it is really war. If you could see the faces of the masters!"

The poor girl had not understood everything when she saw the faces of the masters. The family of Louis Pierre Ehrsam, so united until now, so happy and so envied, was threatened by the greatest calamity which could happen to it—the two brothers were, perhaps, about to take their places in two hostile camps. To the Alsatian mother the war brought not merely the trial of separation, of anxiety, of dreaded waiting; it would place Pierre in arms against Joseph, and Joseph against Pierre. And even if death were to spare the boys, they would remain irreconcilable; memories, pride, interest, ambition, would continue after the men had fought, to argue in defense of opposing causes, to feed hatred, and to murmur the insult which is never forgiven—"Renegade!" Still, nothing irrevocable had yet been said. Joseph's phrase, though disquieting, did not proclaim a resolution on his part. It would not do to be rough with this obstinate nature, which was always closed by a contradiction to all outside reasoning. The mother thoroughly understood this hard and reticent boy who, when provoked, had the air of an ancient

citadel, full of inward rage, but silently awaiting the attack of the adversary, impenetrable to the eye, without communications, without entrance or window, bristling, insolent. With that quickness of mind and that gift of imagination which made of her the most French of Masopolitan women, she had seen the probable consequences, so far as her own family was concerned, of the mobilization order and of the choice which her sons might have to make between Germany and France. She felt sure of Pierre, but how about the other? Well, so far as he was concerned, it would not do to oppose him openly; it would be a point of honor with him to stick to an opinion which he had once expressed. So far nothing very definite had been said, fortunately. But in the short time which remained, even at the present moment, it was her duty, both as widow and mother, to defend the memory of the father, and to prevent one of her children from going astray, deceived by events which happened long ago, and of which she alone could judge.

"I recollect, Joseph, that your father told me, not once, but a hundred times, how he suffered at not accompanying so many friends and relations who chose to go to France. In eighteen seventy-one he was twenty-two years old. He had fought at Wissembourg, at Reichshoffen, then with the Army of the Loire. For months he had lived with Frenchmen from provinces other than Alsace. The stories which he told me,

especially in the early days of our marriage, when 'Revenge' seemed to be a great and honest idea in the minds of French statesmen, were like bread and wine and salt and the business of our factory —part of our daily life. I am sure that he never regretted having fought the Germans. I must state that fact as though God were going to judge me the next moment."

As she said this, she had a great air of authority and dignity. She spoke thus as a matter of conscience, that the truth might be made clear. Would not her sons see this?

"I am the only person to whom your father confided his secret thoughts. Although there was a great difference of age between us, he told me everything, and he never changed to the end."

Joseph nodded in agreement. Madame Ehrsam cut a slice of beef, and, obeying a maternal inspiration, made a sign that this night, the last, she wished to wait upon her children as she used to do.

"Eat, Joseph; you have been going about the town and talking a great deal. You must be hungry."

In the same way she waited upon her elder son, who had listened passionately to his mother's plea. He stretched his arm across the table, and the plate in his hand shook like that in the hand of a child. Unable to restrain himself any longer, he also tried to take the innocent tone of one telling a story of his youth, but his voice

remained harsh and trembling, in harmony with a young and outraged heart.

"Perhaps Joseph don't recollect it as well as I do, but at least twice, when I was eight and ten years old, we went on pleasure trips with my father across the frontier. He wished to show us the sources of the Moselle. The first time, I remember, when we got there, he said, 'Take off your caps, my sons, and drink the water of a French river.'"

"I recollect that very well," said Joseph, "and you shall see. As I was the smaller my father set me on his shoulder, so that I might look over the bushes and see more land and more villages. Is it true?"

"Yes, I have not forgotten it, either."

"And the other thing which he said: 'How well one feels in France! I can breathe better. I should repeat, even if a Schwob heard me, how well one feels here!' He was very much moved. Ordinarily his voice had no singing quality—"

"Oh no!" said Madame Ehrsam, trying to laugh.

"Well, that day it sang."

"He had picked poppies, cornflowers, and daisies that day," the elder went on, "and coming back he passed before the customs bureau with a tricolored cockade in his hat."

The mother with a quick glance pointed out to Pierre his younger brother, who was eating rapidly and who had not refused to follow his

father's example. Pierre smiled faintly. They said in their hearts: "Joseph will come to us. What he said just now was only from impulse, and the first grumble, expressing the annoyance of this blond Alsatian, suddenly disturbed in his repose." They recalled other memories to which the engineer partner listened without replying. But when he had finished the last mouthful of beef, pushing back his plate and folding his arms, with his hunger satisfied now and more sure of his strength, he turned to his elder brother and said:

"We are losing time, and I have not much left, Pierre."

"As much as I have."

"No. You are going on an adventure, and that begins when you like. I obey the law of what is my legal country."

"I that of my conscience."

"Whether we call our will by all sorts of names, fine or disagreeable, they will still be two wills, yours and mine. I am going to my regiment at Mulheim; you are deserting."

"I am joining France, you Germany."

Hardly were these words uttered when Pierre, Joseph, and their mother found themselves on their feet.

"Ah, my sons, if you must separate, do not insult each other."

She had come close to Joseph and had laid both hands on the shoulder of the more violent

of her sons, of the one who resembled his father in the fury and suddenness of his anger.

"Don't say anything more! Keep back the words which wound! I think I understand you, and can divine your reasons, my boy; you want to sacrifice yourself for me."

He shook his head and looked at the floor.

"Oh yes, I understand! You can never make me believe that you are not generous—self-sacrificing. You have shown it too often. I beg of you, if you only wish to save the factory and our fortune by joining the German army, do not consider my future, of which I am sure you are thinking. It will not be a long one, no matter what happens. Do not think of anything but your own. Consider whether you ought to go in one direction when your brother goes in the other. Even if the Germans confiscated the factory, I should have enough to live on in Masevaux, in a single room, with one of our work-women. Nothing can be hard for me so long as my sons do not hate each other. Listen to me, both of you. Spare me memories which would kill me in my loneliness to-morrow. Let me see you go away without anger toward each other, even if you do not understand your duty in the same way."

Joseph did not answer and did not raise his eyes.

Then Pierre, passing quickly from one side of the table to the other, came up to his mother.

"Let my brother and me have a talk, mamma. I promise that you shall not hear from your room

one word louder than another. Come, let us go up-stairs. Will you, Joseph?"

Madame Ehrsam, then the elder, then the younger, went silently out of the dining-room, and, as they did every night, went up-stairs by the great square staircase of oak from the forests of Kirchberg. Before leaving the room where they had just dined Joseph leaned over the table and turned down the wick of the lamp, leaving it like a night-lamp.

He joined his brother in the study where they were accustomed to smoke, one cigarettes, the other a pipe. The two young men sat down beside the table, facing each other, and talked in a low voice. A candle, standing on a stand behind Pierre, threw a faint light on Joseph's face, who now, alone with his equal, looked straight at him, with a hard expression on his face. They had loved each other for twenty-five years and the anger was, so far, only in their minds, but there it was bitter.

"Why are you going to do differently from me, Joseph?"

"Don't you recollect? You have all of you, men and women, repeated often enough that we ought to remain Alsatians in Alsace, not to leave it, to keep land, factory, influence, to prevent the German from living here by not making room for him, to annoy him without disobeying him. When I have set out on a road I never change my direction."

"That was the policy for the time of peace."

"Do you think it entirely useless in time of war?"

"Certainly. You are going to add to their number."

"That does not mean to their strength."

"Oh yes, you will be one more force in the German army against the French army."

"I shall appear to be. You understand, I shall appear to be. It is something which I am compelled to do by my fidelity to our Alsace."

"What do you mean by that?"

"By her misfortunes, by her weakness, which I shall not increase. But I shall not be the same kind of enemy as the Germans."

"Shall you refuse to fight?"

"No, I cannot do that."

"To advance?"

"No."

"To retreat?"

"Assuredly not."

"Then I cannot imagine what you mean, Joseph."

The young man thought for a moment, absent-minded and with wandering eyes, as he often was during a business talk.

"No matter what I think. I have considered everything because ordinarily I talk of nothing."

Pierre smiled at the allusion, and, looking affectionately at his brother, said, "In what you say, and in what you conceal from me, there is

love for France and something which is the mark of the race."

"Do not deceive yourself. I do not love France so much as you do."

"It is, after all, something to love it less."

"If she were not attacked now—"

"Ah! how glad I am to hear you say that!"

"—I should criticize her severely."

"Unjustly, I am sure."

"What do you know about her, my poor Pierre, imaginative creature that you are? And what has she ever done for you?"

"She gave me my father and my mother, who are yours, too."

"Well, what has she done for them? No, do not answer me. You would answer with empty words, and I should not believe you. You have never lived in France, any more than I have. You have read her books, glanced over her pictures, dreamed of her—"

"Listened to the call of my blood."

"I am listening to mine, too, which does not say the same thing. Let us argue like men, and over things which we know about. Now you know as well as I that she is a weak nation—"

"She has justice on her side."

"Weak, you understand, and attacked by a mighty monster."

"Formidable."

"Which has been preparing for a long time, and which has foreseen everything. Well, in the

war which is going to sweep over Alsace I have a duty which I mean to fulfil; it is to save your fortune, your family which will come later, and my own."

"Ah! that is it."

"Suppose France does not succeed in this new war?"

"That is what I was waiting for. You think that she will be beaten?"

"Certainly."

"She will win."

"Suppose she does not? What will you do, after the defeat, and what will happen to Alsace, which you will have abandoned? It will be German entirely and for all time. I do not want that to happen. I am keeping her."

"She will become French again, and you will have served in the ranks of her conquered enemies."

"I shall also keep, no matter what the fortunes of war, the factory which our grandfather founded. I am concerned about the future of the two hundred working-people who are in our care. You forget everything."

"I am making a sacrifice; it is not the same thing."

"It is all right for you, but how about the others?"

"Ah! my dear brother, at all great moments the man who does his duty may cause other men to suffer, his children, his wife, his relatives. I

am risking our fortune—my part of it, at least—and the safety of my mother, but I think that I am doing what our honor demands."

"And the working-people?"

"There would always be work in the valley, even if our house were to close. You will keep it going? Then no harm will have been done them, and I shall have given them an example."

"Of thoughtlessness, let me say. But I say again that we are obstinate fellows, you and I; there is something else to do now besides trying to turn me from what I have resolved on by arguments or memories of childhood. You will accomplish nothing by it, you nor mamma nor anybody else."

"Then it is all over?"

"Not yet; we can go back for an hour to being manufacturers."

"That is true."

"Partners, who are going on a long and dangerous journey, in different directions. To whom shall we intrust the management during our absence? I had thought of Eugene Denner."

By an effort of will which Joseph did not have to make, Pierre put aside the arguments which crowded into his mind. He looked for a moment at the photograph hanging over the desk, and said:

"As you like. Denner was trained by my father. He is a little old, but still able to make decisions and knows our business thoroughly. If

you are going to-morrow we must study the situation up to-day."

"I have already done that."

"Give orders to the banks, provide against certain mortgages, draw up a power of attorney for Denner, and especially one for our mother, who will take care of our interests better—"

"You are right, Pierre, I had not thought of her. You see that collaboration is useful. Let us go down. Take the key of the office."

The elder brother took from a nail the key which an employee came and asked for every morning and brought back every night. Then, lighted by an electric torch which Joseph took from his pocket, the brothers went down quickly. They passed their mother's room and spontaneously paused for an instant to listen. No word was spoken to call them back; and yet their mother must have heard them. She was awake. A line of light passed beneath her door. The two men walked across the courtyard toward the central building, older than the others, with a longer roof, and a chimney on the east end. It was a storehouse for the bales of cotton, in the end of which they had in 1911 cut off and arranged a well-lighted room which was occupied by the cashier and other employees who attended to the correspondence and bookkeeping.

Joseph opened a safe, took out several books and bundles of papers, and, sitting down by Pierre at one of the tables of varnished white oak, a

luxurious piece of furniture ordered by the elder, set to work. For more than three hours he went over accounts, asked for information from his brother, wrote down the principal instructions which must be left for Eugene Denner, wrote a few letters, drew up the power of attorney by which the two brothers intrusted to their mother and their chief employee the provisional management of the factory of Ehrsam Brothers. When they had both signed it eleven o'clock was striking on the fifty-year-old clock which was caged on the roof above them and which regulated the life of the factory.

Joseph said: "You will try to get some of your funds transferred into France through mamma. Besides, if the government"—he spoke of Germany —"confiscates your property, I am sure—you understand? sure to find what is needed, by borrowing—and to keep the factory going. I have friendships which you have not been able to make—"

"Which I have not even tried to make."

"That is where you were wrong."

"Or honest; that depends."

"True; but all that is past now, isn't it?"

"Irrevocably."

The two brothers rose, moved by a same impulse, walked to the window opposite to where they had been working and which opened to the northwest. It was Pierre who turned the latch, and as he did it he thought how this old piece of iron had been ordered, paid for, looked at, and

then handled by their father and grandfather. The halves of the window fell open. The old panes rattled, ill secured by the dried-up putty, then Pierre and Joseph stood in silence in the cool air, their hands resting on the window-sill.

The softeness of the day continued into the night. Beyond the last buildings of the factory they could see between the indistinct, gray outlines of the trees the first roofs of Masevaux, very pale under the moon, and the tower of St.-Martin's, then the great folds of the mountains, some covered with a vague shadow, still akin to light, others with dull silver, a sheet falling from the meadows in which shone here and there the perpendicular stream of a waterfall. The calm was immense, complete, and each of the brothers thought, "How many poor people there are tortured like us by the order which fell on the valley this evening? How many are there who cannot sleep? How many will leave to-morrow? This happy countryside, whose last hour it is, and which knows that that hour has come!"

They remained in this way for a quarter of an hour, enjoying the certainty and the supreme joy of a thought in common. Then Joseph, who had always posed as the man who cannot be moved by anything, laughed a coarse, beer-hall laugh which sounded strangely among those deserted buildings and this lonely country.

"See here; at any rate we must try not to shoot at each other!"

Pierre raised his eyes to heaven; he had thought of that, too, but he did not reply, for he had, alas! nothing to answer.

He only said: "How many subjects we have discussed this evening of which we have never spoken before! Your ideas were so different from mine, and I hardly suspected it."

"How could we help it? I am one of those who only speak on days of disaster. I hope you will never catch me at it again. Besides, what's the use?"

Pierre pressed his brother's hand tenderly, broken-hearted, not wishing to show how much he suffered, and, having closed the window, he left the office. Joseph took the key of it, saying:

"You can go up to your room. I will hang the key where it belongs, then I will see mamma."

The elder went up-stairs, passed his mother's door, and went on to the end of the corridor. He had forgotten to take the candlestick which was placed every evening on a stand in the vestibule on the ground floor. When he had gone on he turned his head. At that instant a little light shone at the other end of the hall. It was his younger brother, who held in one hand the light and in the other the key of the factory. Pierre, motionless in the shadow, saw this heavy fellow, apparently as calm as usual, go to the door of the study and open it; he heard the little click of the key as it found its place on the nail; he saw this non-commissioned officer of the morrow in the

German army cross the hall, knock twice at Madame Ehrsam's bedroom door. The answer reached him, as it reached Joseph, immediate:

"Come in, my child."

The last thing which he saw, as Joseph entered the room, was the fitful gleam of the yellow beard and the fixed eyes above it.

The mother had not gone to bed. She must have been praying, for her prie-dieu was drawn out a little from the wall, and her bed, contrary to her custom, was covered with a brown spread which did not show a wrinkle.

Madame Ehrsam, in her arm-chair at the foot of the bed, facing the door, looked at Joseph to see whether the long conversation between the brothers had decided them to go off together, in the same direction. For several hours she had been making every possible supposition, and every one of them grieved her. Instantly she read on this gloomy face, in this dull look, that Pierre had gained nothing. She did not question her son. Joseph said, simply, laying down his candlestick on the night-table:

"Well, mamma, everything is settled. I have put back the key in its place. Hereafter it is you who will take it, for we have given you and Denner full authority to run the factory. The accounts are all in order. I think that everything has been provided against."

"Everything, Joseph?"

They looked at each other with great love and

great sadness. The mother went on, getting no other reply, "You have a conscience; in all this terrible affair you have to obey it, haven't you?"

These words, of so weighty a meaning, instantly broke down the courage of both. Tears suddenly burst from the eyes of the young man. He opened his arms and passionately pressed his mother to his heart; she had risen and was weeping also. He kissed her repeatedly, and then drew back. They stood facing each other in despair at feeling that the separation was already an accomplished fact, motionless, powerless to widen this narrow gap, and separate from each other entirely. It was the mother who pronounced the last words.

"As you leave very early, Joseph, the cook will not be up. I prepared something to eat myself, which you can take with you. It is in the kitchen table, wrapped up. Don't forget it."

He thanked her with a look, but could no longer contain his emotion. His bosom heaved, he became as pale as his mother, and with a quick movement he caught up his candlestick and went to his room.

At early dawn Pierre went and knocked at his brother's door, but Joseph had already gone. Pierre, as he had promised, spent the morning in discussing matters with Denner, and went several times to Masevaux on errands for the factory. The little town looked just as usual. The housewives went to do their shopping in the Place du Marché and the Grande Rue which runs before the

church. Narrow, four-wheeled carts passed civilian or military automobiles, which were a little more numerous than usual.

The faces of the Alsatians, for any one who knew the race well, were lighted by a little inward flame when men and women met in shops or on the streets. They spoke, even by signs, only to friends of whom they felt sure. All the German officials had remained in the town. People discussed in quick phrases the great news of the day before, and already there were well-informed ones to tell what was soon going to happen. The names were quoted of several young men who had tried to get across the frontier into France the night before. Had they succeeded? Nobody could say. But of so many listening ears in the country and in the town, of mothers, brothers, sisters who had not slept, there was none who had heard more than three or four shots in the forest to the west.

Pierre was spoken to by the tailor, by two weavers, by the foreman of M. Lauth's works, which are near Thann. He learned that Victor Reinhardt, the husband of the young woman who had been confined the day before, had set out at midnight, the first of all, leaving his poor little wife so distressed that they did not know whether so much grief might not turn to illness. Once or twice those who were talking to him questioned him after the Alsatian manner, indirectly and jestingly.

"Well, Monsieur Pierre, I suppose you, too, are going to make a little trip?"

Their eyes, turning between their eyelids, always pointed to the west.

The young man, accustomed to this prudent pantomime in use in oppressed countries, would reply:

"I intend to go and see some old friends of my father's."

Then a hand would be outstretched to him.

"Good luck, Monsieur Pierre. Au revoir, Monsieur Pierre."

And as they parted from each other there were there, in the Grande Rue, or in the rue de l'Hôpital, or in the ruelle du Lièvre, two Alsatians who thought of France and yet did not speak her name.

At the beginning of the afternoon Pierre went to the factory with his mother. Madame Ehrsam was seen with her son in the sheds, in the engine-rooms, in the shops, where the cotton is carded and drawn out and spun. The workmen—porters of bales of goods, pushers of trucks, oilers of wheels, all the women who fasten threads, who watch the moving spindles, turned their heads and watched this mother and son who had not been seen together in the workshops since the death of M. Louis Pierre Ehrsam. What was going to happen on the morrow? What would this man do, whose face was more serious than usual? And what would this woman do, who had the strength to smile

kindly, and who remembered all the names—Honner, Lutz, Diringer, Kuntz, Richter, Comis, Roos, and the rest?

About half past two o'clock the young master went to see a friend older than himself, and not reached by the conscription, who lived in the new part of Masevaux, toward the east, in a villa which had been finished only six weeks before. He came back with him, and they walked across the Place des Blés. It was done with a purpose. It is there that is situated the Hôtel de l'Aigle d'Or, and opposite it, in a building in the style of Nuremberg, is the German tax-collector's office. The German officers liked the beer of the Aigle d'Or, and this neighboring building gave them pleasure, as a patriotic picture, a bit of German ugliness in a town which was too Alsatian for their taste. Pierre was certain to meet there some "authorities," and, in fact, a gendarme and a non-commissioned officer were talking as they watched the people passing near the door of the collector's office. The two friends walked up and down at the end of the Place, and each time they came near the two Germans Pierre would take care to speak louder, in German, like a man who is not concealing his plans.

"You see, I join my regiment to-morrow. I had to straighten out my affairs, but I can be in Mulheim early. My brother started ahead of me. I shall not fail in my duty, either."

The friend made indefinite answers, and the two

Prussian functionaries listened and made official notes.

That evening, after dinner, the mother and son sat awhile in the dining-room. They talked, hand in hand, near the window, while darkness came for the second time since the town crier of the municipality of Masevaux announced, with sound of drum, the "precautionary mobilization." The French newspapers no longer arrived. Madame Ehrsam had read and thought over the short news paragraphs in the *Thanner Zeitung*. Two numbers of the paper were still upon her knees.

"Still, Pierre, you see the *Thann Gazette* says expressly that it is not war. See, here in number two hundred and five, of Tuesday, July twenty-eighth, it says that England is trying to arrange the difficulty between Austria and Serbia. In the number of the thirty-first, which I received this morning, you can read a reassuring despatch from Berlin. It is at the bottom of the page. I know the words by heart. 'The report according to which the Emperor is said to have ordered the mobilization of the army and navy is inaccurate.' And in the same way, look, a little farther on: 'The Strasbourg Chamber of Commerce recommends everybody to be calm. It remonstrates against the withdrawal of funds from the savings-banks, and the "stocking up" with food and wine.' Well, if after eight or ten days the tension between the two countries diminishes, and everything is

cleared up, you will simply have performed a dangerous escapade."

"Undoubtedly."

"Don't you think that if you waited a little, if you hid—?"

The dark, earnest face of her son lighted up with a smile.

"Oh, mamma, mamma! how can you, who belong to the Alsace which cannot be deceived, have any more illusions about Germany? Never doubt it, we are at war, and I have only minutes to remain here."

"Then, my darling, go!"

The look which they exchanged revealed the most perfect communion of mind and heart; the look of a Frenchman and a Frenchwoman, with the same standards of honor, suffering in the same way, esteeming each other because they felt that they could rise above any sorrow. At that moment Anna came in and said:

"Monsieur, there is a workman here who wants to speak to you. He says the mobilization order was posted through the town at five o'clock."

Pierre rose, went out, and came back in a few minutes.

"It was that good Borgue, who came to give me information and, of course, advice. There is another true-hearted Alsatian."

"You did not tell him anything, I hope. But now war is declared officially. To-morrow, Sunday, August second, is the first day of mobilization."

Recalled to reality, from which she had never been very far removed, Madame Ehrsam said: "Can you tell me which way you are going? We are alone here. I should like to accompany you in thought as far as I can. It will not be far, for I have traveled so little!"

Leaning against his mother and kissing her from time to time, Pierre told her his plans. He was like a condemned man making known his last wishes.

"When I am no longer here you will be careful not to repeat what I have just told you. I leave you in charge of the papers which are in my room, my drawings, my letters. Perhaps you can reply to any letters which come for me. I shall think of you all the time."

The last word which they exchanged, about ten o'clock, was this: "Mamma, I am most anxious, as you can understand, to know where my brother Joseph is. Try to get a letter to me in France."

The mother had not the strength to answer. She had noiselessly opened the door of the house and Pierre had passed through. He was on the second step of the flight and already there was darkness between them. Clouds were passing over the moon. The mother saw the tall, slender figure of her son lost in the shadows by the front gate; she did not even hear the sound of the wicket closing. Pierre was already on his way; the great adventure had begun.

II

THE WELCOME

HE had put on a brown hunting-suit and a soft hat. In one of his pockets was a revolver, and in his right hand an iron-shod stick.

Before leaving the shadow of the wall he looked in the direction where the road runs down toward the town. He saw an indistinct form, a woman, perhaps, who crossed the road and went in to the rue du Chariot. He waited till she had disappeared and then went up noiselessly with quick steps, along the cemetery, on the road to Rougemont, the road to France. The extreme silence astonished him. Why, since the mobilization order had been issued, was there no movement of troops in that direction? But it was in vain that he looked between the plane-trees, first toward the meadows which fell away to the left of the road, then toward the cultivated hills which rose on the right; he could see no group of soldiers. Behind him or before him there was no column of troops, marching or halted. Everywhere was the calm night, with its familiar scenes. On the

plateau the buildings of Baerenhof resembled a huge haystack; in the fields the sheaves stood in regular rows, like the tents of a sleeping camp. Partridges and larks alone slept in them. He heard the call of a bird in the night. A little farther on, when he had reached the region of the tall orchards where the apple and plum and cherry trees are, he turned round and tried for the last time to see the town behind him, but the moon was still clouded. Masevaux, in the valley, was no more than a bit of shadow, and in the circle of the mountains there was only a single little light, hardly as big as a star of the tenth magnitude, which watched between its pines, one knew not where. Pierre felt cut off from all that he loved. A little farther on he approached the edge of the forest, which is composed of lofty trees and which covered equally both sides of the road, a simple lacework on the left and vast stretches on the other side.

Beware, young man! For forty-four years Prussia has counted the Alsatian deserters. She knows that the list is not yet closed. She must have given orders for the frontier to be well watched on this night when the world is to be divided as at the Last Judgment. Take care! The frontier runs through the middle of the wood. It is all very well for you to remember paths, to know ravines, clearings, the groves of oak and those of beech; hunter of hare and woodcock, you have heavy odds against you. Custom-house

officers and foresters are clever at catching smugglers. And to-night you are doing the greatest smuggling that there is; you are stealing from the fierce, warlike power the emblem of command which she had given you, and your mind, and the clear glance of your eye, which can aim well, and your young blood. She is there, never doubt it, to watch over her property.

Thinking thus, Pierre left the road a little before he reached the edge of the forest, and, crossing the corner of a plowed field, began by following the line of trees which was separated from the orchards and fields by a strip of grass. He had cocked his revolver and held it in his left hand, against his thigh. If there was a patrol in the woods he would hear it marching; the ground is more resonant at night. As for following the road so near the frontier, it was no longer to be thought of. He listened, twice, thrice, holding his breath. The wind, which was driving the clouds along, did not reach down to the tops of the beeches, even on these high spurs. Nothing was struggling; all life, wide open, was drinking at the springs of earth and air. All cells opened their invisible mouths, and the forest smell—masterpiece of life and death combined—escaped from the wood through all its arches.

A military automobile rumbled for a while behind Pierre Ehrsam, and as it went down a hill raised a dust which made a sorty of Milky Way, bright in places, and soon dissipated. Pierre,

hearing nothing more, entered the wood between two clumps of willows. He waited till his eyes were accustomed to the darkness. He soon made out what lay before him—the trunks of oaks, mixed with a few elms, planted wide apart, light colonnades running up a rising ground, smooth and carpeted with dead leaves. He stood motionless, ready to throw himself on any custom-house officer whom he might perceive behind the trunk of a tree, with beating heart, and for the first time in his life, at war! Some clumps of holly on his left, beside the road, were all that could conceal an ambush. The young man began to mount toward the right, and when he had gone up two-thirds of the wooded height he followed a horizontal track which led away into green depths. Every minute he would stop to listen; then he would resume his march forward. When he had gone about a kilometer he heard the sound of a whistle, then the voices of men calling in German, "Fire!" Two shots rang out from among the trees at the top of the hill, some hundred meters from him.

At the same moment his foot slipped in a hole filled with water, and he fell on his side. He picked himself up quickly and stood erect against an elder, thick with leaves, which grew in the mud. Men were running, probably three or four of them. Their footsteps shook the ground and sounded loudly on it. Pierre thought he saw a shadow pass, black and vertical, as if one tree had approached

another. He took his revolver in his right hand and pointed in the direction where the forest ran up the hill, but nothing moved any more, and the noise stopped. An owlet called three times in the valley. Pierre looked at the muddy mass where he had fallen. It ran downhill, became a pool, then a brooklet which farther on went to swell the springs and ditches. He remembered the name of this rivulet, the Hahnenbächle, and consequently knew that the frontier was not far off. He continued to advance cautiously, slipping from tree to tree. Five minutes more and he thought, "I am on French ground." Another few minutes and, going down the hill, to the side of the road, he put his head out between the bushes. Amazing thing! This road which led into Alsace was as deserted as a road in Brittany or the Landes! "Oh, why have not the French sent a battalion of chasseurs or a platoon of cavalry? How easy it would be to capture Masevaux to-night!"

On the other side of the road there was no more forest. A vast plateau stretched there, the edges of which could be dimly guessed. A little way off Pierre could discern a black mass in a field, tall and slender. He recognized the monument erected to the dead of 1870, on the territory of the commune of Rougemont-le-Château, near the Goetz farm.

The Alsatian sprang out into the road, and gave the French military salute, then with quick steps he made for the village. He soon entered the

winding street, which about the middle of Rougemont runs downhill toward the church. There, at the top of the hill, he was at last stopped by the French authority.

"Who goes there?"

"A friend."

The man who cried, "Who goes there?" was a custom-house officer. With his hooded cloak on his back and his rifle in the sling, he came out of an inn where he must have been at table a moment before. He walked to the middle of the street, seized his weapon with both hands, and held it horizontally, at the height of his chest. He went on, all the more rudely because he was not opposed.

"You come here from the other side, I see."

"Yes, to enlist."

"To enlist, to enlist? It's easy to pretend that. Come along, you."

The inn door was open now. The flame of the fire was reflected on the windows and shone out upon the road. Shadows were mingled with it. There were men drinking in the large room, no doubt the men of the customs post.

Four custom-house officers were, in fact, seated at one end of a kitchen table, with their faces close together, four old men full of red wine, civilians, clearly, from their chatter, but equipped for war. That was evident; their rifles, their belts, their cartridge-boxes, lay in a heap on the empty part of the table. At the end, near the fire, which he had lighted to dry his clothes—for he had fallen

into a ditch—a non-commissioned officer of the customs force was talking with the hostess, animated, perspiring, laughing, in the shadow of the hand which she held up as a screen. The flames rose, darted, flickered in the draughts which came in from every side.

"Adjutant, here is a party whom I picked up on the road. He says he is an Alsatian."

The other, who had a red nose, a bold eye, a horseshoe beard, and a certain confident look, as of a frontier general, turned, looked Ehrsam over, and began to question him in dialect.

"There is no doubt," he decided, after a short dialogue, "that you come from over there. Only I cannot tell for what reason you come to France, can I? That concerns my superiors."

"Where are they?"

The adjutant's eyebrows came together sharply. He ceased to turn toward the fire the uniform trousers which smoked on his tibias, his femurs, and his belly, and said, without rising and with his arms crossed:

"Do you suppose that I am going to tell you?"

The three drinkers, who had been joined by the hero of the arrest, began to laugh, and applauded their chief noisily.

"Is there anything else that you would like? Tell where the chiefs are? The prisoner has a fine cheek!"

"Prisoner?" asked Pierre, looking at them, one after the other.

They were silent, all five of them. The most timid of them finished emptying his glass to keep himself in countenance and to account for his not answering. They all had the honest faces of small farmers, cultivators of onions and lettuce, who were kept in good health and prepared for retirement by a daily walk under arms. The Alsatian's strong face, the indignation of this deserter for France's sake, whom they called a prisoner, intimidated them.

"Dame!" replied the bravest, "we cannot let you go."

"There would be a report against us, for sure," said another. "It might get up to the Ministry of Finance."

"Perhaps even higher yet," said the oldest of the squad, solemnly.

Pierre, seeing he was the only one standing of the eight persons present, took a chair and, turning his back to the drinkers, sat down before the fire between the hostess and the adjutant.

"I will stay with you as long as is necessary. But I am surprised that you have nothing else to do. The mobilization order was posted up at Masevaux yesterday afternoon at five o'clock."

"The same here," replied the man.

"The first day of mobilization is the day which began two hours ago, as I can hear the church clock striking two. You do not seem very active, for soldiers at war."

"We are keeping watch," replied the revenue

officer. "The proof of it is that we captured you. And there are more customs guards outside, only they did not meet you. But they are on the watch, don't worry."

"So are the Germans. At the distance which you are from the frontier they could capture you all in a few minutes, and me into the bargain, and I should be shot."

"Not such fools! We would leave! We have orders to beat it!"

"To fall back," said the adjutant, annoyed, pushing back his chair. "Charmoy, let him speak. Perhaps he has something interesting to say. The latest instructions say that one must question prisoners. Did you meet any troops on your way?"

"Not a company! In fact, it is extraordinary, and certainly intentional. They surely would not neglect to guard themselves, unless the apparent negligence is a trap. I heard a patrol marching, and two shots."

"We, too. No doubt it was a deserter, like you."

"That is all. There is no garrison at Masevaux."

The men at the table behind him winked at one another, like men who cannot be humbugged.

"At Saint-Amarin and at Thann there are only small detachments. I heard this yesterday from a friend who was just back from the valleys. How is it that you have not already tried to go into Alsace? There are so many hearts which long for you."

"He talks well," said the guard who had arrested Pierre.

The others nodded assent. The seed of France was in them, undeveloped.

"Yes, why don't you go in? Of course I know that it is none of my business—yet. But I should like to tell this—and other things—to an officer of troops, infantry or cavalry, no matter which. Take me to one. You certainly have one at Rougemont, at the beginning of a road."

"Not one," said the chief.

"What, not one?"

"Don't you know—it is not a secret to a ıybody in France—that all the troops have been drawn back ten kilometers, so that nobody can say—"

"Who was the jackass—?"

There was sly laughter in the kitchen, and the hostess, annoyed that they should speak ill of any "big bug," whom she did not know, for that matter, rose and said, with a yawn:

"My husband has gone to bed, and I am going to close the inn. Do you want anything more, gentlemen?"

"Two thimblefuls of red wine, madame, to drink to the health of the army."

She crossed the room and opened the door of the cellar, after closing that into the street.

The customs officer studied his prisoner, and, judging from many indications that he had to do with a man who knew more than he did himself, decided to refer the matter to his superior. He

buttoned his jacket, which he had opened in order to dry the top of his trousers, brushed with the palm of his hand the cloth which was still wet and clinging to his legs, then put on his cap, and rose.

"You men go and wait for me at the entrance of the road to the cemetery. We will begin our round at half past two. Let nobody leave! I will take this party to the lieutenant, who does not like to be disturbed, but, after all, for forty-four years there was no war, and now it is war."

Pierre was astounded to see that the men remained sitting while their officer spoke to them, and also that they replied, not by a "yes," which would have been the proper reply, but each one by a little phrase, jesting or grumbling, according to the humor of the speaker. "All right, we'll go." "Don't keep us waiting; we all want to go to bed." "Promise that we shall go home when your trousers are dry"—as though they had been simple laborers, even now, hired for a civil job of no importance. He went with the adjutant, who walked down the hill, passed the church, and a little farther on knocked twice with the handle of his knife on the shutter of a window on the ground floor, which was opened instantly. "What is it? Ah, it is you, Guth! Make haste; I am telephoning. Who is that?"

"An Alsatian, Lieutenant, who wishes to enlist."

The customs officer, a heavy, alert man with one eye almost closed and the other as burning as

a candle, examined Pierre for an instant and made a face.

"Are your enlistments any of my business? Let me alone!"

"I can't, Lieutenant. Where shall I send the Alsatian? You are in command here. We are at war officially."

The lieutenant slammed the shutter, but only a few seconds had passed when he opened the door, a little lower down, and called Guth back.

"Keep an eye on him till daybreak. There will certainly be a service automobile for Felon. The general is there. He will know what to do."

For two hours Pierre, intrusted to the care of the customs guard Charmoy, had to wait under a shed, inclosed on three sides, where a farmer of Rougemont kept his carts and his farming tools. Seated opposite to each other, each on the shaft of an ancient tilbury, they smoked long pipes, and Pierre could convince himself of the incredible difficulty of making a French peasant talk when his distrust is aroused. Not a word was pronounced by this Vosgien which had any interest, any color, any sense of personal liking or hostility. Charmoy replied to everything that Pierre said, "That may be," and to every question which he asked, "We know nothing at all in our neighborhood." The warm love of Alsace for France which Pierre explained brought nothing but a smile, and that only on one side of his mouth.

When day broke, automobiles began to go

through Rougemont. Others stopped there. Each time the customs guard would get up from his shaft and make a sign to the chauffeurs. "See here, are you going to Felon?" Most of the chauffeurs, who knew no more about Felon than Pampeluna, went on without replying. Finally there came one, in charge of an empty motor-truck, who said:

"I am going pretty near the place you speak of. What do you want?"

"Take this chap. He comes from Alsace. Do you understand? You must take him to the general. Can you manage it?"

"Yes."

"But you must not let him go."

As he got on the seat beside the military chauffeur, Pierre, tired and cross, said to the man who had guarded him all night, "France does not give a very tender reception to the children of Alsace."

"Possible," said Charmoy, who was already hurrying up the winding street of the town to join his comrades.

The chauffeur, a very young soldier, had driven the automobile of a man of social position who owned a town house in Paris, and two country places, one in Seine-et-Oise, the other in Seine-et-Marne. He was rosy-cheeked, had a mouth like a Cupid's bow, a mustache the size of a lead-pencil, and held on the end of his tongue the stump of a cigarette which did not interfere with his talking or his laughing. In a few minutes he had put the

prisoner in a good humor, had told three or four stories, his own among them, and had got on the basis of the most complete comradeship with him. He knew nothing whatever about Alsace except the principal brands of pâté de foie gras, and the black ribbons worn by the women. "I say, but your women are smart, with their big bows. I saw one at the Théâtre Montmartre—no, really!" "Revenge" seemed to him already certain.

"It was Germany's fault," he said. "Our mobilization has begun, too. The Boches must look out! If you could see our troops! Hullo! Look there, on top of the second hill, over there. Don't you see? Between the poplars? In two minutes we shall be face to face with the pioupious of France. You are not frightened, are you?"

He said this with a half-suspicious air because he saw that at the name of the soldiers of France the Alsatian threw himself back and became very pale. Pierre felt an emotion which the other could not understand. They could no longer see the red caps and trousers, hidden by the rise in the ground up which the automobile was now going. For the first time he was going to meet those soldiers who were famous in legend, who to-morrow would be his companions, whom his father had awaited for forty years, and to meet them, not on parade, but beginning the war, about to enter Alsace, perhaps even his own valley.

It seemed to him that the automobile would

never finish climbing the hill. At the top it stopped. A battalion of infantry was advancing at a rapid pace. The ranks were a little uneven. The men were picking mulberries or willow twigs in the hedges; a few bits of song floated above the marching companies. Everything was new; they must have been inspected the day before. Not a button was missing, and the mud on their gaiters was fresh that morning. A few faces were raised toward the horizon, a few eyes looked for the lines—they must be near, now—where the frontier passed, but a manly joy parted their lips, defiance wrinkled their brows, the great pride of being the picked troops, the first in the great adventure, swelled every breast and lent vigor to the weariest legs. Old non-commissioned officers, splendid and swaggering, terrible as though they had made half a dozen campaigns, made ready to show the privates how to run, charge, skirmish, pursue; the officers, in their regulation positions, buttoned up in their tunics, were living "the hour of betrothal," that hour which has no equal in life; the younger ones were laughing among themselves or with the soldiers. The captains were standing up in their stirrups, looking over the hedges, and were surprised that "it had not already begun." The conquering sun had the whole sky to himself, and was holding at a distance a few light mists which had slipped down from the mountains and were gliding over the woods.

Pierre had risen. Without knowing quite why,

he had put on his gloves, and, knowing very well why, he saluted. A captain, he of the third company, turned his horse to the left and rode up beside the stationary motor-truck.

"You are from Rougemont-le-Château?"

"Yes, Captain."

"None of the enemy's skirmishers in the neighborhood?"

"Nothing visible. The baron said that the game was not yet viewed. Only a few shots in the wood last night."

"Many?"

"Three or four toward midnight, two later."

"Who is this civilian?"

"A man who wants to enlist."

"An Alsatian?"

Pierre explained what he had done the night before. The officer, devoted to the letter of the regulations, which were still intact, or thinking about something else, showed no feeling and simply said:

"Very good."

Then, as if becoming suspicious, he added, "Where are you going to enlist?"

"To Felon, Captain."

"That is a mistake. Go to Belfort."

"Then I shall have to put him ashore," said the chauffeur. "I will leave him with the gendarmes at the first village I come to and they can straighten the matter out."

It was in this way that Pierre Ehrsam, entering

his new country, began to suffer because of her, and to find out that she was badly managed. Before reaching the next village he shared the slice of bread and the piece of salt pork which the chauffeur brought out of the leather pocket in which he kept part of his tools.

"You seem to have little directing," he said, pressing the hand of the chauffeur, who was going on after intrusting his passenger to the gendarmes of X.

"Too little, do you think? Enough for comfort."

"Yes, but the point is to know whether it is enough to live, to fight against that German monster, which is well trained, I can assure you."

They promised to send him on in the first car which was going to Belfort, and once more he waited.

III

MASEVAUX AWAITS FRANCE

DURING this time Madame Ehrsam, alone in the big house, on her return from the factory, where she had spent a part of the morning, asked herself:

"Why are my sons so unlike each other? Did I fail to talk of France to Joseph? How his father would suffer if he saw that he had not two Welches. Yet I certainly kept away all those Germans who sought by every means, the brutal, the tricky, and the sneaking, to make their way into the old Alsatian households. Perhaps I did not know the French well enough. I never made a trip among them but my wedding journey, through the Schlucht, to Lake Gérardmer, Lake Retournemer and Lake Longemer, to Nancy and Dijon. That is all, only once! For us, who were well disposed, that was enough. My husband knew France, but the boys? And yet the breed is good, I will answer for that, in Joseph as well as in Pierre. But partly through my fault, I admit, they were only French through their imagina-

tions. We dreamed of France, we talked of France, in the family, but it was a long way off, both in time and distance. And the French did not come to us, either. They deserted us. France and Alsace were like husband and wife separated, who never see each other, who never write, and who, in spite of everything, begin to find the tie which unites them a heavy burden, though they are unwilling to throw it off. Where is Pierre now? Where is Joseph? They are no longer free; they are caught up, like two poor grains of sand, and rolled along in the great waves which are about to dash against each other. In spite of themselves they will move, they are already in motion. The only thing which they have is the soul of their will, which escapes everything, the lofty, trembling flame which is dead in so many, but which is alive in them. Through it they can still be themselves, choose something else besides what they are doing, live with other companions than those with whom they touch elbows—with me and with God. I must help them, I must write them. The younger especially needs it. Ah, what would their father say if he were here when I write the address, Joseph Ehrsam, Mulheim—Mulheim, when war was begun between Germany and the country which is secretly theirs?"

She began at once to write, on the table on which her sons had leaned two nights before, for one last talk, beneath the portrait of Louis

Pierre Ehrsam. First it was a long letter to Joseph, tender, asking all about himself, not complaining, not reproachful. The name of the elder was not even mentioned. The mother only said, "I have heard nothing since last night of the man whom we love so much." When it came her turn to write to Pierre she reproached herself because it gave her greater pleasure. The thought came to her, "Where am I to send it?" She wrote, all the same, and left the address blank.

All about her work was going on. Women had been engaged to fill the places of part of the workmen who had been called away from the factory by the summons of the Emperor. Masevaux lay calmly, as usual, in the heat of that August day, encircled by its green mountains, and the fruit grew heavier on the trees in the orchards. Madame Ehrsam, absorbed by the duties of the management which had fallen to her, and which she secretly enjoyed, scarcely ever went out of the "Big Yard," as the workpeople called it. No cannon thundered. German troops did not show themselves anywhere. The French frontier was closed. The *Thanner Zeitung* published the most serious news, which nobody in Masevaux could deny or confirm. The 3d of August it was the declaration of war against France by Germany and the invasion of Belgium, the 4th the declaration of war by Austria against Russia, against which the fully prepared German armies had already been advancing for five days.

That day of August 6th was a day of anxiety and suspense for the whole valley. They had learned at dawn that during the night there had been a clash between patrols at Lauw, near by, where the Doller flows into the great plain and runs toward Mulhouse. A patrol of French cavalry had fired on a post, killed two customs guards and a Prussian officer, wounded a light-horseman and then had withdrawn. They had withdrawn, these first French cavalrymen, but surely they would come back! Already they were seen everywhere. From the slope of the Ballon d'Alsace to Dolleren, at Oberbruck, at Kirchberg, at Niederbruck, then at Masevaux; from houses and barns, perched on the side of the Baerenkopf and the Südel, the same rumor came down, shouted or whispered, inflated and ornamented by those who passed it on, stirring to every one, hoped, dreaded, sowing joy or terror—"The French soldiers have been seen on the tops of the mountains! The frontier is passed! They are coming!" Oh, how many people there were who dreaded lest the rumor should be false!

The next day more than two hundred reservists were assembled to take the train at Mulhouse and join their regiments in Germany. For twenty-four hours a number of these young men, posted as sentinels on barns or on the lowest slopes of the mountains, had watched with growing anxiety in the direction of the heights on the south and southwest.

Their comrades had said: "If the French come, we will go with them. Nobody will go to Germany." All day the watchers hoped. But it was in vain that they looked; no shadows advanced from the forest but those of pines and larches which turned and lengthened on the pastures as the sun sank lower. A little before dark more than ten of them, as the news of the arrival of the French continued to spread and to grow, happened to find themselves together at the beginning of the rise in the road from Huppach, where there is a beautiful, free view of the whole circle of mountains. They kept saying, "If those we are waiting for will only come, if they will only make haste!" Several times they thought they saw rocks or mists moving. How they would have run! How they would have saluted! At dark they said, as they went down to the Place des Blés: "One night more! Perhaps they will come in the morning!"

Madame Ehrsam had gone to mass that Thursday, August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration. As she was leaving St.-Martin's Church and going down the stone steps before, it a manufacturer, an old friend of her husband's, turning aside from the street along which he was passing, and coming hurriedly up, said to her, excitedly:

"Do you think, madame, that the French will be here this evening?"

"The French? Oh, then perhaps my Pierre may be with them! But who says so?"

"Everybody; they have been seen up there."

"Last night, yes, at Lauw, a handful of men."

"No, madame, up there and in force."

They both looked up at the peaks, where the morning mist was beginning to break up and lift in little clouds.

"You believe that, monsieur?"

"I am sure of it. To-night or to-morrow they will be here. I tell you this because you may perhaps have precautions to take on account of the factory."

"Probably, monsieur, if it is as you say, I shall give them a holiday."

At the same time Madame Ehrsam did an extraordinary thing; she held out her hand and said, "What happiness, monsieur, what happiness!"

The man went on, with a serious air and lower: "Listen and do not repeat what I am going to tell you. There is no use in dampening the joy of the whole public, especially in war-time, but it is another matter with you, who have charge of so many people. Here is something which nobody knows, but you would do well to think it over. On the fourth of August we were called together by the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Mulhouse. I had no end of trouble in making the trip in my motor, I can tell you. There was official telephoning at every turn of the road. At Mulhouse there was a meeting of the principal manufacturers in the valleys, with

the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the mayor, the krieg-director. It was the latter who made the principal declaration, as you can imagine. Listen to what he said: 'I am authorized to tell you officially that the French are going to come to this part of Alsace. We shall let them come, then they will be squeezed like a lemon.' Thereupon we deliberated on the matter. We were asked whether the banks ought to remain open. We were of the opinion that it was wiser not to close them. So the German officials had received their orders. They informed us that they were setting a trap for the French."

"Well, we will warn the French. I will do it myself!"

"How French you are, Madame Ehrsam!"

She blushed, and replied, sadly, "I thought I was more French than I am."

She was thinking of Joseph. The manufacturer did not understand; he thought that this wise woman was upset by the news, as so many others, so he bowed deeply and went on up the street.

When she got home Madame Ehrsam could not refrain from telling her servants of the man whom she had met, and how it would not be long before the French came. The cook hurried out on the pretense of doing some marketing, and met all her friends in the town, for there were more people out that morning than on a market-day. Anna began to laugh and said:

"I don't know any Frenchmen, but I soon shall. They say they are very nice."

Ten minutes later she had on her Sunday bodice. The foremen in the workrooms of the factory could not keep any order. Men and women called out to one another across the humming machinery, "We can't stay here while they come in." Nobody watched the spindles; all the girls ran to the windows whenever a shadow passed outside. The workman, an old soldier, whose business it was to keep feeding the rolls of raw cotton which the first machines wind and card slowly, left the cylinders turning empty, and waved his arms in the air like a lunatic.

"I should like to see how the gendarmes and customs guards look! Yes, the way they look, all these Schwobs, who order us about so roughly," he cried.

During the afternoon of that Thursday the Masopolitans witnessed a scene which gave them much to think about. It was true that they saw no French advance-guard, but the people who lived near the post-office and those who passed it, who soon stopped and became a little crowd, saw a squad of postal employees rolling a thick copper wire on an axle supported by two wooden wheels. The wire was one of those which passed above the houses, in groups, stretched tight like piano strings, and it must have been cut some distance off, in the country. Pulled by the workmen, it came slowly in, with its gleams

of red copper in the August sun, and wound itself around the spool. An official before the door—only one—guarded the work, but it was useless for him to cast threatening glances toward the curious spectators, the people of Masevaux did not "move on," and continued to watch the postal employees, who were turning the big bobbin, and the wire which kept coming and piling up on it. What could it mean? Why were the workmen carrying off this wire, in preference to any of the others?

A wood-cutter, a big man, still young, with a beard like a pine-tree, pink cheeks, and a sly eye, whispered to his neighbor, behind the brim of his straw hat:

"I helped to build the line. I will tell you what it is; it is the telephone to the lookout."

"The lookout on the Sūdel?"

"Yes, the one which they built there in the forest. When you are on the highest platform you can see into the Place at Belfort. I know, for I have been up there."

"They think they will not need it any more?"

"Certainly."

"Then it is a moving-out squad?"

A ripple of laughter ran through the crowd. All Alsatians know the story of this lookout, four stories high, built of the trunks of trees, outside of which ladders are fastened, an observatory which officers frequently ascended, and which had had its base sawed through in 1913 by unknown

hands. The Germans made haste to rebuild it, carefully constructing the lower story of iron. For this part of the empire really played ugly tricks on its masters. One could hear sarcastic phrases flying about among the bystanders which were carried to the ears of the officer and the postal employees. But the Germans appeared to be in a hurry to finish their work.

"They must know that there are Frenchmen up there."

"Suppose I ask them to connect me with them?"

"I would say, 'Monsieur le Capitaine—'"

"It would be more than a captain."

"I would say, 'Monsieur le Général, come down quickly; they are packing up.'"

The spool became heavy; time passed. The chief of the squad cut the wire with a pair of shears, and the end first scraped the road, then fastened itself against the front of the house opposite. At the same moment a carriage came rapidly up, drawn by two horses. It had been requisitioned by the mayor. The crowd opened. The workmen and the official piled into the old landau, the spool of telephone wire was hoisted upon the box, and the horses, in spite of age and fatigue, were whipped into a gallop and set off to the north. An indistinct murmur pursued the carriage, and a stentorian voice called out:

"Germany is clearing out! Hurrah for France!"

It was the wood-cutter. He looked about him, to see who would come to arrest him, but nobody

came. He only encountered a few black looks in the crowd, which was breaking up, from immigrants or recruits to the German cause.

From that moment Masevaux did not doubt that France must soon come down.

The night was less bright than that which preceded it. People who rose and tried to find out, through their open windows, the secret of the silent countryside saw that nothing shone, water nor stone nor foliage in all the great basin where the town lay. A storm was threatening, a faint light fell between the edges of the clouds, which eddied beneath the moon, driven about by contrary forces, pushed away, attracted, turning about. The earth was at peace, and did not feel even a breath of the wind above.

But they were coming, those soldiers of France!

Far to the south of Masevaux a company of the 171st Infantry, which started from Novillard, is following up the course of the brook La Loutre, in French territory. It goes through the village of Reppe, whose oldest houses, like those of the neighboring villages, have so often heard the footsteps of fighting-men. The night is still warm and the dawn far off. A few shutters open cautiously, others remain closed, but a light shines through the cracks. "How many are there of them, Madelon? Where are they going?" They pass through, and as they leave the village they turn to the right and go into the communal wood, beyond which is the frontier of Alsace. "Then

they are going against the enemy. Shut the window, Madelon, and kneel down on your warm bed. It is time to say a prayer."

The wood is pear-shaped, narrow at first, and then widening rapidly. How dark the shadow is! The men, who have been talking freely till now, have begun of their own accord to talk in lower tones. They have their rifles in their hands and their fingers on the triggers. There are so many hiding-places in the thickets! Every eye searches this shadow, where nothing moves, and whence may come a volley which will lay low the foremost ranks. A hundred meters in the forest, two hundred, three hundred; no shot. The noise like a file and a hammer which their feet make on the road rises between the trees and goes and falls far away with the dust. Suddenly the detachment which marches in advance halts. It can go no farther. A barricade of trunks of trees and branches has been constructed a few days before the engineers at the turn of the road, which now runs toward the north. The captain comes up to the advance-guard and says to Lieutenant Malaurie:

"Take half a section and go and reconnoiter the entrances into the wood."

The officers shake hands, the thirty men climb over the barricade, and scatter through the wood as skirmishers. Every heart beats high. Far up between the tops of the trees, floating clouds catch a first ray of the sun and turn rosy under-

neath. Ten minutes pass. In the fresh and vibrant morning air the slightest sound can be heard, the crack of a dead bough, an oath, the rustling of a body forced through the underbrush. Lieutenant Malaurie walks openly, in the middle of the road. At the university he won a fellowship in history; he is a scholar, a poet. The memory of Alsace sings aloud within him. To be the first to enter the promised land! To be the one who is to begin the deliverance of the valley, the one for whom the elders have hoped for forty-four years, without knowing his name, and whom the children of Alsace ask for when they sing, "Stork, stork, bring us a little *pioupiou* in your beak!" They approach the edge of the forest. A little hazy light shines at the end of the road. Three soldiers, two on the right and one on the left, come out of the thickets. The lieutenant questions them in a low voice.

"What have you seen?"

"Nothing."

"I," said the third, "saw a horse galloping with his saddle empty."

"Which way did he come from?"

"Over there."

"That is the direction of Bréchaumont, so there must be German cavalry in front of us."

They go on in the damp shadows of the wood, which the dawn enwraps but cannot penetrate. The officer examines the map which he holds in his left hand; yes, the frontier is there, a

few steps away, beyond those clumps of hazel-trees which make a thick cushion of leaves all along the edge of the wood, held out by the forest against the light and the wind. It will not do to call out, but the heart demands speech. With a gesture Malaurie calls the men, who have their eyes fixed on him and who run together to him. "Come! No noise!" They advance farther. Here the road issues on the open country; they can see cultivated fields and meadows running down before them, then plateaus rising and bearing houses which are white in the morning sun. The thirty men form in two lines, with their backs to the hazel-trees, at the edge of the forest.

"Children," said the chief, in a low voice, "we are in Alsace, the village before us is Bréchaumont—so—you understand! Attention! Present arms!"

And the rising sun saw the troop of Frenchmen saluting all history and all legend.

They go forward again at once, watchfully; they take the shortest road through the forest to the village. Everything is quiet. Not all the houses are awake yet. There are pots of ivy-geranium and verbena and pansies in the windows. Where can the enemy be? Two women come out of the church and go off up the street. The *curé*, hearing the steps of the Frenchmen ringing on the pavement, comes, on the contrary, to the officer who commands the advance-guard, and says:

"Monsieur le Lieutenant, there is a dying Ger-

man dragoon in my church here. He is shot through the stomach. Can you help him?"

The lieutenant sends word to the surgeon farther back, and the detachment goes on.

It stops at the end of Bréchaumont; the first Alsatians gather around the stacks of rifles. They bring fruit, bread, butter, wine. Young girls pour the wine of the country for the soldiers whom they have never seen except in pictures from Epinal. They speak French as well as they can; their eyes speak more clearly; they laugh. There is no German ambush, not even a patrol on the watch—and yet they are only thirty men, an advanced guard, marching on from place to place. At the second village, Traubach-le-Haut, the Alsatian peasants in the public square raise their hats and women clap their hands. An old man with a white imperial presents himself before the lieutenant and makes the military salute, slow, correct, with his elbow at the height of his eyes, and cries, "Fife la Vrance!" But an old woman crosses herself as those whom she loves pass, and says, quickly, pointing to the east, "Look out for those over there; they are such a bad lot."

The next village must already have been notified of their coming. By whom? By boys, perched on trees? By men on bicycles? By a carriage? Who knows? They are waiting for the "red trousers," they are coming to meet France, they are saluting it from afar, they joke

because it is a land where they know how to laugh, even in danger. The triumphal procession is not interrupted till they get to Burnhaupt-le-Haut. There it is necessary to take by assault the first trench, held by German dragoons. The affair lasts only a moment; there are a few shots, and then the Germans flee. The French pass on and reform. The day is warm and clear; the men say, "We are still in our own country."

IV

MASEVAUX RECEIVES FRANCE

OTHER columns had entered Alsace, at other points on the frontier.

On the morning of Friday, August 7, 1914, they knew beyond doubt at Masevaux that the French were coming. Madame Ehrsam, thinking that they would not fail to march through the market-place, had invited herself to spend the morning with a young friend and distant relative of hers who lived in one of those houses with large windows which were built in the seventeenth century for the ladies of the noble chapter of Masevaux. The future General Kléber, who was then an inspector of public buildings at Belfort, had arranged these houses in fan shape about an open court which prolongs the market-place to the southward. They are still in existence, intact, elegant, and severe. Quiet bourgeois dwell in them. A little before ten o'clock Madame Ehrsam rang at the door of the house and entered the vestibule, which was ornamented with panoplies of ancient arms, among which a hunting-horn hung on the

wall. It was arranged that the ladies should wait in the *salon* for the arrival of the troops. Anna was to bring word. Anna, who was French at heart, but above all curious for every sort of news, had come with her mistress, and she and the house servant had climbed up to the roof, from which they could see the sides of the Südel. Twice she called down the staircase:

"Madame, we can see nothing!"

But at ten o'clock she cried: "Madame, here are the French. Come quick!"

Madame Ehrsam and the young lady went up into the garret. The servants made room for them and stood back a little from the window, but not very far, and there were in reality four Alsatian heads framed by it and outstretched toward the mountain.

"Where are they, Anna?"

"What, can't you see them, madame? That red spot there, and that other. There are ten, twenty, thirty—"

"Why, yes, dear friend," said the younger woman; "in the meadow, at the edge of the forest, where the pines make a big curve."

There was no longer any doubt. The soldiers "from home" were running down. They were nearing the orchards; others were only beginning to come out of the wood, and starting to run.

"See how they are hurrrying!"

"That's not surprising; they are coming back home."

"They look like cherries rolling on the grass."

"Why did they not come twenty years sooner?"

"But they are coming now, my dear; the past is dead. They will be here in a quarter of an hour at the rate they are coming. I shall kiss the first one I meet."

"I, too," said Anna.

"Look! They are raising their arms. Are they waving to us?"

"No, they cannot see us; they are picking plums from the branches."

"They may take all they like! They are eating as they run. They don't know whether there are any Germans hidden in the houses near the Odilienbächle, or in the little old houses in the rue des Gants or the rue des Tisserands. How confident they are! Don't you think that they are too confident?"

"Oh no, not here. There are no Germans in Masevaux, at least not armed. All the officials have gone off. The soldiers of France are victorious, victorious!"

Madame Ehrsam, with tears in her eyes, drew back from the window and said, "How many others would have liked to see that!"

"In five minutes they will be here," said her young friend. "Anna, Marie, run down into the garden and pick all the flowers."

The four women went down. They had opened the door which gave on the market-place. People were running everywhere. Under the lindens

and elms of the place the little boys stopped their games, formed themselves into line, and watched, ready to break out into shouting.

The French did not come at once to the market-place. Having crossed the Doller at the Pont de l'Hôpital, they passed before St.-Martin's Church, and went quickly to the station through the main street. No doubt they had been told that some Alsatian reservists were to start that morning for Germany. The soldiers marched on the sidewalk beside the houses in two files, and in spite of the warnings which they had received they carried their rifles in the slings. Was not this a friendly country? They were hot from having run so much, they laughed, they looked at the windows, the doors, the signs; some of them were eating the plums which they had picked on the mountain-side. They said to every one whom they met, to calm them, "Don't be afraid, friends; we have come to set you free." At the head, in the middle of the road, seated firmly on his horse, a big adjutant of dragoons acted as vedette. He held his revolver in his right hand, and when a half-open shop seemed suspicious he would spur his horse, go up and look, leaning over in his saddle, and then go on again.

When they got to the station the French learned that the train for Mulhouse had left nearly two hours earlier.

Then the companions separated, to occupy different parts of the town and to show themselves

there. One of them debouched on the market-place by the rue de la Mairie, near the trees planted in a *quincunx*, near the children, who, half frightened, half reassured, were calling out from all the open windows:

"There is the captain."

"He has a pistol, but he is not firing it."

"Look at the badge—Forty-second Infantry."

"The regiment of Giromagny; papa told me so."

"Hullo! there is the flag!"

"No, they have none."

"Look, at the end of the square."

In fact, at the window of a house at the end of the square appeared and floated a tricolor flag, the old flag of the fire company of the time of Napoleon, an emblem proscribed and hidden for forty-four years. A woman was fastening the staff to the iron-work on a balcony.

The first shouts burst forth. Heads appeared at the windows. The side-streets began to pour curious spectators into the square. At that moment the door of the house opened wide and the young woman, who was in black, who walked well, and who carried in her arms all the flowers of her garden, advanced toward the captain. She made no mistake; she let the mounted man pass her, and went straight to the officer, who was on foot. She hardly knew what to say; she had not thought. She was embarrassed and proud. She hesitated, first held out the flowers. and then said, quite loud:

"Take these, monsieur; it is Masevaux which gives them to you."

And all the people applauded. The soldiers were standing at rest, and already people were coming up to them and saying: "Where are you going to lodge? Come to our house." The officer, surrounded now, and questioned, too, was talking to several veterans, notables of the town or simple comrades in the old-time army—who introduced themselves to him, and shook his hand, no one wishing to be forgotten. Cyclists came, carrying orders. The spectators said:

"We have a fine force here, but this evening or to-morrow we shall have a lot more."

As if to show that they were right, and to give them patience, twenty dragoons, who had been patrolling since dawn and going all over the valley, arrived in the square. They passed the company of infantry, which was going to take possession of the cantonments and prepare dinner. With heads high, sabers slapping against their saddles, pleased at having made their round and having begun the war as easy victors, they dismounted. Several fastened their horses to the fountain in the middle of the square, and, gazing about them, looked for adventures.

One of them had turned toward the house in the garden of which there was not a single flower left. It was warm. Anna and her companion beckoned to him. "Come and drink a glass of wine." He laughed good-naturedly and, dragging

his boots, mounted the steps, kissed Anna and the other girl. The dining-room was close by. They made him go in there, to do honor to the Frenchman, certain that the mistress would approve. On the table, beside the glass which they filled to the brim with Ribeauville, there still lay stems and leaves, trimmed from the bouquet. But as the cavalryman was about to go out, wiping his young mustache on the back of his hand, he saw the hunting-horn hanging in the vestibule.

"My dears," he said, "there is something that I understand. I am Baron de R.'s huntsman. Give it to me!"

Anna, who understood only the Alsatian dialect, laughed even before her companion had translated the phrase to her. The soldier took down the horn, walked out on the front step, and sounded a fanfare. Ah, how well he played, with his cheeks puckered by the effort, his chest swelled, and his eyes raised to the sky! There were shouts and clapping of hands. A crowd of people gathered. Windows opened again. There also arrived a sub-lieutenant of the 42d, who, seeing this cavalryman celebrating the entry of the French into Masevaux after his own fashion, came up and said to him, laughing:

"What are you doing here?"

"Lieutenant, this is my instrument. I am a huntsman. I will bet that you never heard what I am going to play."

Putting his lips again to the *embouchure*, with his cheeks compressed, his elbow high, his head raised boldly to the sun, he played splendid, galloping notes, a sonorous salute which the lieutenant did not recognize.

"It is true. What is that?"

The cavalryman, reversing and shaking the horn, said: "Lieutenant, that is not often played. It is the 'Change of Kingdom.'"

Proud, looked at, admired, applauded, he went and hung up on the wall of the vestibule the horn which would never again play the "Change of Kingdom."

Before night the dragoons had gone. The battalion of the 42d was comfortably installed in Masevaux; the last official agents of Germany had fled. Carriages, benches, ladders, formed a barricade on the east side of the town behind which, armed with the Lebel rifle, which the little boys pointed out to each other, the infantry awaited the charge, which was always possible, of a party of Uhlans.

Before it was quite dark, as the mother of Pierre and Joseph was returning home, thinking only of the great event which she was going to recount to Joseph—for where was the other, and how could she write to him?—she received a visit from a manufacturer from the Thann Valley, who was also deeply stirred.

"Ah, madame, what a change! Our valleys are all full of excitement and joy. When I left

Thann two hours ago I saw the French coming down from the mountains."

"The same thing here."

"You know the road, first a factory, then a house, then an inn, and then a shop; well. everybody was at his door."

"Just as they are at Masevaux."

"The finest thing was at the gate of Monsieur Lauth's big park. The old manufacturer, who had known the French days, was there with his whole family. He had had a table set out, covered with glasses and pitchers of wine, and as the soldiers passed he served them himself, madame, himself, and the men came and drank to the health of Alsace and the health of France. The barrels of their rifles were stuck full of flowers, so that the bullets could not get through. Really, madame, there are no flowers left this evening in the gardens of the Thann Valley."

"My friend has none in her garden, either."

A few days later Mulhouse was taken; a few days more, alas! and Mulhouse was lost. The troops of France, called to defend Paris, already threatened from a distance, had to fall back. But Thann remained French, and Masevaux, and Dannemarie, the three sacred valleys which were preserved and, without fighting and without suffering, became French once more.

A little before the end of August, Madame Ehrsam received a letter from Pierre. He was at Besançon. His mother wrote to him, "I, too, am French."

V

L'ABADIÉ FARM

FAR, very far from Alsace, in the fair land of France, there was about the same time another family which had also grown smaller because of the departure of a son. The sun had set scarcely an hour before. One could still read a newspaper by the light which fell from a very clear sky. The servant, a niece of the bailiff of L'Abadié Farm, had made her rounds about the château and in the château. She had closed the rusty gate which defended the estate on the side toward the road because it was war-time, although it would have been easy to go round it; she had unfastened the spaniel, the baron's hunting-dog, put up the bunches of straw on top of the wall on which some vegetable seeds were drying; she had said to the cock: "Let us sleep, Le Doré; be quiet. You certainly have scratched about enough to-day, like me." She had made sure that the cats were not hidden in the kitchen, and she was coming out of her factory, as she called it, when in the vestibule she met the young mistress of L'Abadié.

"Marine, is everything shut up?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Is the cat's hole in the door closed?"

"Pardine!"

"And Dido?"

"She has already gone to her room. Who works little needs much sleep!"

Dido, that is to say Marguerite, was the second servant, an Arlesian, who had served Marine rather than her masters under the title of chambermaid of L'Abadié Farm for two years without having made any advance in the good graces of the principal authority of the house.

Marie, who knew how Marine harped on this string, replied, "Then go up to little Maurice, Marine; he was sleeping badly just now. I am going to sit up with my father, oh, not very long, as usual."

A young, fresh laugh floated up the inclosure of the staircase, dry and sonorous as the body of a violin. The servant was carrying a tin candlestick in her right hand. The flame, close to her body, lighted the face of a woman some five-and-forty years old, whose features were still regular and fine, and two thick, puffed, wavy bands of dark hair piled up, forming a tower, tied by a black-velvet ribbon, the ends of which fell and floated on her neck after the manner of Arles. The full bust, the slender waist, the simplicity of the dress, and the graceful bearing revealed her southern race, even if the eyes, burning and pas-

sionate, though in repose, had not betrayed the woman's ancestry and the high-strung land from which she sprang. Marine had served since her eighteenth year in L'Abadié Farm. Her masters had acquired the habit of calling her "thou," as an officer affectionately addresses a soldier. Strangers called her "aunt," an honorable appellation which, in Provence, designates the directress of the rural household, the overseer of the kitchen and the storerooms. She had a great sense of order, and a pride in the house and in the honor of the family. Was she not at home at L'Abadié? Nobody gave her orders, or so rarely. The baron often waited on himself. She had to do only with a young girl of twenty-two, of a southern, that is to say, most complete, courtesy, with this tall, slender, queenlike Marie, who was standing at that moment on the lowest stone step, with her hand on the balustrade of forged iron. The servant's expression changed suddenly and her face became tragic.

"Listen!"

Both of them turned their heads in the direction of the large windows which lighted the inclosure of the staircase, which were beaten during five months of the year by the wings of imprisoned butterflies, wasps, and flies.

"Do you hear them rolling, mademoiselle? More trains! They never stop, night or day, these last months."

"Once the night was peaceful. You can imagine

all that they carry, my poor Marine—men, horses, provisions, munitions—"

"I can imagine very well; they carry death. When will they stop? When will they bring back Monsieur Hubert?"

The same laugh stopped the grumbling.

"You would like to see him back now? We have been at war only twenty-eight days, and we shall need months for victory, Marine, perhaps even more. Go and sleep! Good night!"

The young girl went down the last step of the staircase and opened a door on her right, through which she entered a tiled room where, when it rained or the mistral blew, her father received the farmers and casual callers. Guided by the ray of light which shone below the door at the end of this room, she entered the large drawing-room, which was also M. de Clairepée's workroom. No luxury spoiled its simplicity. A few articles of furniture, Louis XIV candelabra of copper, and some portraits hanging on the walls recalled the past. By looking closely one might discover here and there a tear in the lovely violet silk, strewn with white water-ranunculus, which covered the chairs and hung in panels from the beamed ceiling to the carved plinth.

As soon as she entered the room the young girl was careful to walk slowly, placing her feet only on those boards of the floor which did not creak, every one of which she knew. She looked at her father, seated at the other end of the room, at a

table heavily laden with books and manuscripts, with his elbows apart, flat on the table, confined between two folios, which made a niche. With brow wrinkled by the intellectual effort, which he had begun rather late, he was working on a history of the Barons de Caderen de Clairepée. Marie came up, and he did not see her, or rather did not wish to see her. She knew the hours and the habits of the evening and respected the labor, the book begun ten years before, and which a dozen volumes of notes and extracts collected in the libraries of the south, especially of Mejanes, at Aix-en-Provence, had not been able to outline. When she reached the table of old Provençal walnut, shining with a somber fire, an heirloom, rich, glossy, more spotted than the tail of a peacock, she stopped, took out of a work-table a ball of wool transfixed by two wooden needles, and, sitting down, began her own work, which was of a modest nature and needed no long time to finish, a tiny garment for the future child of Maximin Fustier, commission dealer in oil and a tenant of M. de Clairepée's.

He studied documents and wrote; his daughter knitted. These two beings, who lived for each other, had passed every evening in this way for many years, in silent intimacy, and they dearly loved it.

Alberic Dieudonné de Caderen de Clairepée was fifty-five years old. Physically he belonged to that type which has a somewhat overdeveloped

head on a rather frail body. Look at him as he works under the lamp. He wears neither spectacles nor eye-glasses, and at most he turns the page a little, to read a difficult passage, in a manner which would not have been necessary for young eyes. His beard, of a light chestnut with some white hairs, short and pointed, into which his mustaches, upturned and firm, do not melt, and his hair, scanty on the middle of his skull, but abundant on the sides, curly and rather long, frame a broad brow, a strong and well-cut nose, straight, and falling sharply and not with flaring nostrils on cheeks which are full but not fat. M. de Clairepée has gray eyes, with a quick and gentle look. Women's eyes, they said when he was young. The eyes of a turtle-dove, according to the Costé de Veillargues, once neighbors and rivals, now disappeared. But that matters little; they are the windows of an upright soul, which has no cause to hide itself, and which appears as soon as it is called for, quickly moved, tender in words, readily smiling in spite of the great misfortunes which it recollects, much more firm than would be supposed from its first desire to be amiable. The learning of the writer is not profound, and the great work of family history progresses with difficulty, in the well-founded fear of insufficiently knowing the time in which the ancestors lived. "Our nephews," it says in the preface, "will consider that it is full of faults and has value only as a curiosity, if, indeed, our

nephews bother themselves with the history of the Barons de Clairepée at all. They will have so much else to do."

If M. de Clairepée has not had the training of a historian, it would be a mistake to consider him ignorant. No doubt, he has little more than newspaper ideas on all that does not concern his race, his religion, his Provence and how to be charitable even when one is poor. But as for what remains, the field of his knowledge, who can say that it is small? To see the world in which one lives as it ought to be seen; to keep a cheerful countenance in the face of a life of narrow means; to be sure of God as a friend of the family, and to show it by refusing to be sad; to show this also by recognizing it in the whole divine work, from a blade of grass to the management of the church, does not show an inferior mind, and the name does not matter—a man who knows these things is not lacking in greatness. M. de Clairepée, who had had a thoroughbred horse and a tilbury at the time of his marriage, had promptly disaccustomed himself to this luxury and to a number of others. Now he went on foot, thinking, looking, cutting the heads off of thistles and brambles with his stick, saying good day to all whom he met, even if he did not know them, so long as they were not in automobiles, and he was less than three leagues from L'Abadié. In fact, he sometimes counted four leagues for three. "Explain to us,"

his friends would say to him, "this mania which you have of greeting, right and left, with your hand, your head, your voice, people whom you meet on your way, and who are often astonished and do not return your courtesy."

"Well," he would reply, "inside of three leagues I am at home and it seems to me that I have a right to be polite! It is important for the good order of empires, as Bossuet says, that neighbors should say good morning, and bear with each other. You don't take into account the recompenses that I gather, the friendships which my custom has gained me. People make inquiry after a while; they learn that it is the Baron de Clairepée who bows so readily. That undoes the mischief made by more than one evil sentence in a book or a newspaper. And then, rich men on foot are a pleasing sight to poor men riding. They feel kindly toward me for being such an inconsiderable nobleman. In fact, my dear fellow, if you want to know what I gain by wearing out my hat and my arm, since I do not aspire to be Deputy, and do not even wish to belong to the Conseil Général, I will confess what I want. By bowing to a great many people I hope to collect some happy memories, and a prayer or two for the day after my death."

Consequently, he bowed to every one he met, up to three leagues from the farm, at Château-Renard as at Graveson, at Eyragues as at Maillane, where he had known the great Mistral, at St.-

Rémy as at Masblanc, and even to the east, in the villages of the Cavaillon plain, which are beyond the Petit Crau. People came to him from still farther off, for consolation and advice. He gave almost as liberally as he bowed, and the stream of visitors was none the smaller for that. M. de Clairepée knew how to sympathize; it is a great art, and one which cannot be learned. He gave advice like a man who has intelligence and knowledge of the world, and often the advice proved good. Alms-giving was more embarrassing for him who performed it, especially toward the end of the quarter. This rich man had an income of exactly 11,275 francs in good years, but bad years were not uncommon.

He loved this country with its antique face and its singing heart. It had adopted his race. Sometimes he took part in its labor. At haying-time, when the need was great, he had been seen to mow his fields or load a cart. He knew the customs, the legends, the speech, the word which sounds the best, the appropriate gesture. He had no ambition, and it was only for amusement that he belonged to several political clubs, such as are found in the smallest country villages. He was a member of various associations, charitable, devotional, or for pleasure, and enjoyed going to meetings. He was a citizen of two municipalities, and owned property in the territory of Château-Renard, that very rich commune from which trains start every day for Paris or foreign coun-

tries, loaded with early vegetables, and, moreover, his name was on the roll of the Joyous Brotherhood of St.-Eloi. Twice a year a cart decorated with fruits and foliage, sheaves of wheat in July, vine branches and grapes in the autumn, is brought before the church which is high up in the village —to be exact, half-way up that gray rock which bears the gutted towers of the château, those towers which have been warmed for so many years by the sun that their stones have taken on the color of the sunset. There the *curé* blesses the fruits of the earth and the draft animals and the great crowd which bustles around. But if you think that there is only one horse attached to the *carreto* of St.-Eloi, or even four, or eight, or twenty, you know little about Provence. Every brother ought to be represented at the fête by his horse or his mule and his whip. He takes the animal to the farm of the *baile* of the year, and there are at least fifty horses, sometimes sixty or eighty, which go up in procession, ornamented with superb bridles, blankets, trappings on which shine embroidery, spangles, and bits of looking-glass, and where little bells of brass and silver ring and sing together. The carters go with their horses. Some go beside them; others ride; a few, the most active, stand erect on the croup; and all, with skilfully handled whiplash, making a continuous discharge, cracking to north, south, east, and west, they "do the four whips." The skill of the driver, the richness of the trappings, the floating ribbons,

the beating tambourines, the march of the procession, at first slow and measured when it begins to descend, becoming faster and more disordered with the noise, delight the gardeners of Château-Renard and all the southern multitude, jubilant and dancing with pleasure at the disguised festivals of Ceres and Bacchus. Now, one year, which they still remembered, M. de Clairepée, then young and newly married, had come himself to the fête of St.-Eloi bringing the best horse of L'Abadié, and, leading the procession, he had cracked his whip so well that the fame of it survived, and people still said, the first Sunday in June, "So-and-so does the four whips very well, but, *péchaire!* not so well as the Baron of L'Abadié."

One could never believe how much this skill in a trivial art had helped the reputation of M. de Clairepée, who was reproached by the peasants of the plain of the Durance, with their sure sense in matters of race, with belonging originally to the Cévennes Mountains, and with being, in fact, a Provençal of only two centuries' standing, whereas more than one ox-driver or plowman had the face, the gestures, and the nimble mind of the Greeks, his ancestors. Serviceable and kindly, he had made himself as much loved as was possible—that is to say, a little. He had hardly a neighbor in the plain whom he had not furnished once or twice, and often more frequently, with plants for his vineyard, a queen for a hive in mourning for its queen, grafts from fruit-trees

which he had in quantity in his orchards. But he never sold these small services. As François Bouisset, the farmer of L'Abadié, used to say, half serious, half laughing, "It is because of your antiquity, monsieur, that you ought to give what others sell."

M. de Clairepée agreed. He had more valuable services for Bouisset, who was a real friend. For, following the example of his father and his grandfather, who were skilful iron-workers, he had learned the trade of carpenter, and something of that of wheelwright, and many small repairs, either for the farm or for his own household, were made by his own hand, with wood cut down on his own land and of bars of iron which he bought from a contractor in Château-Renard. During part of each day the planing of planks, the driving of nails, the hammering of iron could be heard in a workshop built back of the house, at the entrance to the garden. He had also frequently to look over his own lands and visit the property of the neighbors with whom he was having dealings, for he had a surplus of oil, wine, and almonds which he sold directly. He had plans for barters which he had to arrange far in advance, and casks to be repaired, and drain-pipe to be replaced, and dead trees to be cut down, plane-trees, mulberries, holm oaks from which he would get his supply of wood for the kitchen and the winter evenings. This often took him away from home, to distances which he could not

walk, and when the trip was too long or the day too warm for that he would get into some gardener's cart, chance met on the road.

Having occupied his days in this way, according to his station, he felt that he had the right, when evening came, to turn to the thing which he loved, and to cause to live again those who, before him, had led the same life at the farm of L'Abadié or at the foot of the Cévennes.

"Marie," he would say sometimes, "all this is dictated to me by my motto, for if we read, below our arms, 'Let us try,' it would ill beseem us not to try." The bold and very French word which had commanded all his race and preserved its power over the inheritor of their blood. "The United States," he wrote on the first page of his manuscript history, "has borrowed our device from our house. It is a loan to which we consented because we did not know how to refuse. The first cadets who go out each year from their military school at West Point have the right to wear this bold but not boastful word on the buttons of their tunics. They wear it written in our language, with the sense which the men of our country have attached to this verb, which is so fitting for human conditions. In fact, we are not obliged to succeed, but we are obliged to try, and the merit is equal before the judge of the action. Honor is not absent from this device. It appears there, on the contrary. One can hear it ring out, stir, arm itself, undertake—'Let us

try!' I love above all this attitude of preparedness, this spirit, often invention, but always of hitting back and resisting which makes us all, under the blows of fate, resemble a horse bitten by a gadfly, which is revived by the bite and made to run faster, even beyond its strength. But this is not inconsistent with nature; we try, it is God who gives success. Besides, is the most perfect of our works anything more than an attempt? The positive, realist, and Christian spirit which has been that of our ancestors since the eleventh century seems to me to have shown its value and to fit our own times as it fitted theirs. So I love the motto of the Clairepées—'Let us try.'"

Such was the man, a peasant, better educated than the rest. His estate of L'Abadié, two hundred acres in the plain, twenty-five in the *garigue*, a hundred and twenty down in the Montagnette, beyond Graveson, where all the farms have their semi-Alpine pasturage, poor of grass in the summer, but the safeguard of the sheep against the fogs of the Durance, constituted the most important part of his property. L'Abadié Farm was the word used to designate the dwelling-house as well as the farm which belonged to it. In the minds of the people of the district, all of whom dwelt upon the land, the house of the proprietor and that of the farmer, and the stables, and the sheepfolds, and the barns, and the chicken-yard where a hundred chickens lived, was all one property

and had only one name. And that name came from the first owners, the monks of Montmajour, who scattered their monastic houses all over the land of Provence, about which the peasants generally assembled, forming a new village. It was evidently a secondary foundation in the Château-Renard district, an abbey transformed into a hospital at the commencement of the eighteenth century, and which still dominates by its mass and the golden walls of its orchard the streets of the village of St.-Baudile. The farm of L'Abadié was also built on the end of the decline, on the lower part of this spur, detached from the Alpilles, which projects toward the north, as far as Château-Renard, cutting the valley of the Durance, not a mountain nor a hill, unless just at the end, where the rock rises which bears the two towers, but the back of a ridge, a strip of stone, of sand, of *garigues*, of stunted shrubs, and also of fragrant flowers dear to bees, between the flat stretches of the Provençal plain. The farm was never called a château except by the clerks of shops in Paris, Marseilles, or Salon, who, not knowing the situation, and ignorant of the beauty of words which express things accurately, could not imagine that a baron should live in a house which, in the eyes of the wind, the rain, and any one who passed it, was precisely like that of a master plowman. Yet nothing was more true. The long, two-storied house, the upper surbased, covered with tiles much faded by the sun, was

separated from the road which ran from Château-Renard to St.-Baudile by a grille which was always open and by a courtyard overgrown with weeds. A fig- and a plane-tree spread their branches there and each year grew more rapidly because their roots had penetrated through the pavement to the depths which are moistened by subterranean streams. They grew as large as their kind is capable of, and as rapidly as those lines of trees by which the country in front, on the other side of the road, was cut up, lines of plane-trees along the vineyards and meadows, lines of cypress, always running from east to west, a rampart for the farms and their gardens against the mistral, while behind, a short distance from L'Abadié, the vegetation languished, not finding in the soil the reserve of sap which it would need to endure the summer, the heat, and the Rhone wind, which blows nine days at a time. "An almond-tree," said M. de Clairepée, "has all it can do to live in the *garigue*, or a scrap of a vine whose grapes are few and taste of flint."

At bottom, he felt that he might have been a different man from what he was, of a wider usefulness to the same causes and the same district. As he was too old to change his manner of life, he had resolved to bring up his son and daughter more firmly—that is to say, more tenderly, than he had been.

He had recognized and encouraged the military vocation of his son. He had borne a long separa-

tion from Marie in order that she might receive the best sort of lessons, at Arles, then at Aix. But he had watched in every way to see that this girl, as she got learning, should not become proud. In his visits, in the letters which he wrote to her when in town, in the talks which he had with her during the vacations, he repeated: "Pride of knowledge shows a small mind. If I did not think you capable of being at the same time simple and well educated, my child, I would sacrifice the learning to keep the greater treasure." He had succeeded. Since her return to L'Abadié Marie had gone back to the work of the house with a heart wholly free from vanity and devoted to the happiness of others. She was gay without ever being noisy. She always went, came, and spoke at the right time; she identified herself with the country like one who had to live there; one never saw her in pursuit of a fiancé; to any one who watched her she gave the impression of a life intrusted to one greater than herself and, consequently, fearless. To this Marie, always busy or planning for the happiness of "her child," Maurice, for the welfare of the farm or that of the poor who were really poor, to Marie, faithful every morning at the mass said by the *curé* of St.-Baudile, M. de Clairepée would say, jokingly, "You will bore the good Lord with so many prayers." It was, in fact, an expression of admiration. They loved each other, lived for each other, she respectful, silent, upright, and full

of good sense, having nothing of the southerner about her except her father's pale complexion; he enthusiastic, quick at promising, and a maker of plans, clinging to illusions and fairy-tales without believing in them, as to wings which are too weak, but which lift one for a moment and which at least help one to walk well.

While Marie worked there opposite to him, on the other side of the table, according to her custom, she laid out the day's work of the morrow, a fragile edifice of plans and resolutions, like, in that—she never dreamed of it—to the diligent ancestresses, of strict economy and resolute heart, the safeguards of the Barons de Clairepée, whose narrow patrimony had lasted for centuries only through the daily effort and the virtue of its mistresses.

From time to time, between two stitches, she would look at her father with that maternal manner which they have, even when young, when they are French and well guarded. Marie's face was, like his, regular and with harmonious lines. But it was above all interesting, with a deceiving calm, on which could be read, by slight but sure signs, the working of a mind and heart full of delicate shades. Her thin, long lips, scarcely tinted with rose, were the most expressive of her features. She was beautiful when one saw her speak and smile. Her head, small and well poised, bore an aureole of golden hair, extremely fine, waving in broad undulations, which she

dressed in Greek style, in two hands which were twisted above the nape of her neck and formed a coil there—"Mademoiselle of Sparta," her father would sometimes say. It was asserted that he had married her mother, a Dieuze—a race of goddesses, says the legend—because of her blond hair. We have some stray Greeks in our south. This one was well built, her movements had a natural grace, and everything which she wore fell in graceful lines. As no one had yet asked Marie's hand in marriage, there were murmurs around L'Abadié, "We shall see her a nun some day, that is sure." The Baron de Clairepée, to whom these reports were repeated, cried out: "By Dieuze and Clairepée, you are imbeciles! You will put the idea in her head."

Marie had never spoken of becoming a nun. She waited, having the strength not to let her fancy wander, different in that from most weak natures. She gave to her neighborhood that love which others waste—in reveries. People looked at her, but she would pass calmly on. She had a warm heart which people considered cold because it did not waste itself on them; she would say, "The flowers which I wear fade quickly." Sometimes she sighed when she thought of this, but she turned quickly to other things, determined not to lose her young strength, which was useful to so many people, and first of all to her father.

The historian's pen scratched on the thick, rough paper whose pages were to compose "the

manuscript." Leaning over, with his eyes raised to the text of a volume open before him, and then lowered to follow the copying of a passage which had attracted him, M. de Clairepée was reveling in what he called the joy of composition. Nine o'clock struck on the Louis XIV clock. He finished the line which he was writing, wiped his pen, closed his book of notes and sketches, turning down between his thumb and forefinger the part already covered with writing, and said, as he raised his head:

"A hard day, but a good job. I have finished the history of Alberic First, twelve thirteen to twelve sixty-seven—"

"And now you will go to bed, with the benediction of your ancestor."

"No, I am going for news."

"Where are you going at this time of night?"

"To Château-Renard, of course. Don't frown at me, Empress, don't scold me; it would be of no use. I can't live this way."

"What do you expect to find out?"

"You forget that this is Friday."

"That's true, Friday, the big night market."

The young girl's face was no longer the same. The transition from a tragic look to a smile was swift. All the intermediate shades were painted one after the other on Marie's lips, in her eyes, on her brow and cheeks, and the expression of her face, accompanying the movement of her mind and changing with it, resembled a dark,

threatening wave which swells, breaks, and rolls away in foam.

"I am afraid of only one thing, the news, whether good or bad, which you will get from the dealers in artichokes, melons, and beans. The sources of information do not seem to me reliable."

But he replied, seriously: "When one is very much in love, Marie, it is hard never to hear any one speak of the woman whom one loves. One must have people pronounce her name, have it always with us, praised, felicitously or awkwardly, insulted, even; we are drawn to those who utter the two, three, or four syllables. Some day you will understand this. I am going to Château-Renard to have the market-gardeners tell me something about France, good or bad. Good night, my child. Give me my stick."

Why had she not thought of this market at first? Probably because her father never went to it, not having early vegetables and fruits to sell. She knew that on that night, from Friday to Saturday, from ten o'clock at night till three or four in the morning, the market-men under the gas-jets and electric lights sold to the commission-men the vegetables from the innumerable gardens which surround the little town. They fill with their baskets and the noise of their talk the semi-circular walk, shaded by plane-trees. She even remembered now having seen in her childhood these hampers of tomatoes, onions, cabbages, and carrots so brilliantly lighted that her tired

child's eyes closed, dazzled by the glare of the colors.

Marie folded up her work and went with her father. He opened the closet in the anteroom where he kept his hunting-things, and fastened on his calves a pair of gaiters whose steel buckles recalled the old days when people did not have to be economical of metal. Then, having taken the hollywood stick with the turned handle, which he preferred, M. de Clairepée set out.

Still surprised, but pleased at bottom, by this resolution which showed in her father a fine reserve of youth, Marie mounted the staircase, and when she emerged from this glass cage which had been turned into a stove by the heat of the day, when, having put out her lamp, she went to the open window of her room, which looked out on the country, she breathed with all the delight of her whole being the night air which passed in irregular waves, some still burning, others almost cool, coming perhaps from the sea. The perfumes differed; every breath had one. All the lavender-gatherers on the Alpilles must be busy now. There was no moon; there remained a little light high up in the sky, and even in the higher parts of the earth.

The window opened on the plain, on which it looked down from the height of a good-sized tree. This was enough to make the view immense. Magnificent in color under the light of the sun, it still remained beautiful, in line and in tranquillity,

under the light of the stars. This hazy landscape, drawn in charcoal, seemed to be without limits. A little way off, toward the south, the village of St.-Baudile ran down the barren hill, and its last roofs were buried in the vines and the fruit-trees of the valley. Beyond, far off, the Alpilles, as though they had been real mountains, raised their peaks, below which, here and there, bathed in light, some bare field took on the transparency and the aspect of a tiny glacier. In front, on the contrary, it was a flat country, irrigated by the canals, the ditches, the rills where the water of the Durance gallops. They were the "Gardens of St.-Rémy," where the flowers are not picked, but kept for the seed, vineyards, meadows, and fields of wheat, and there were even, off to the right, other gardens and other fields stretching out, and ever these lines of cypresses, recognizable in the light, guardians of precious things, ready to break the wind at the gates of the farms.

This evening, as the northwest wind does not blow, these good guardians doze, upright on their dust-colored feet. Marie allows her spirit to wander in this country. She does not recall it. She abandons it, for a while, to the peace and the silence of the great, familiar spaces. Then she calls it back. She tries to imagine her father's entrance into the little trading-town, and the talk before the hampers, under the electric light. She thinks of L'Abadié and the number of positions, household and charitable, which she has

filled for years, but especially since her brother's departure. She asks herself: "What errands have I to go on to-morrow? What plans to make? What things to do?" She looks at the roofs and the walls of the village, only a ribbon stamped with soft lights and shades, where a lighted window blazes, here and there, like a spangle. She recalls to her mind the names of some of those for whom she has been busy during the day, and she thinks: "For the present, and until God wills otherwise, you belong to this big village which proudly calls itself a city. Devote your mind to the little good which you, and you alone, can do; put out of it the dreams which would linger too long and which take up the time of action; let it belong undividedly to the scrofulous, half-paralyzed girl, your neighbor, whom you promised to go and see. Let it go into your smile when you bow to the pork-butcher's wife, into the hands which have begun to care for the wounded at the hospital, into the greeting which you return to children, into the short meditation on the words which you must say and those which you must not say, in order that Jesus Christ may be more warmly received in Provence, and not reduced too often to the solitude in which you go to find Him, stealthily, at the end of the day. There is still a little light on the tops of the mountains. Good night, light."

She closed her window, half opened her door to be sure that she would know when her father

came in, and undressed, but did not go to bed.

At midnight the noise of the bolts shot by M. de Clairepée and the heavy step of a tired man told her the expedition was ended. She closed her door quietly, so that no one should know that she had been sitting up, and went to sleep.

Rising early in the morning, she passed the first part of the day at the hospital, where the Red Cross ladies, those who four weeks ago had left Arles, Avignon, or Marseilles to live at the hospital of St.-Baudile, were sharing unequally, but not without courtesy, tasks which were often confided to auxiliaries, were washing, cleaning, scouring, and keeping everything in order in this huge building which formerly received the sick from the plain of the Durance, and which had suddenly been raised by the Military Administration, the day after mobilization, to the rank of a military hospital. Many things were still lacking before medicine and surgery could feel themselves at home and well served.

At eleven o'clock, in the heat which changed the dust of the roads to burning embers, she returned to L'Abadié. The sun was red, its rays were blistering, the air burned one's lungs. As she was about to go through the rusty iron gate which marked the limits of the courtyard before the farm, the young girl cast a look far away at the village houses, brilliant among the faded foliage, like apricots on a trellis. She went at once to the

dining-room, built on the left of the vestibule, opposite the drawing-room. M. de Clairepée, who was very regular in his habits, had already sat down; he was preparing to breakfast from a cabbage soup and a casual partridge, the odor of which filled the room.

"I killed it on Thursday, my dear, on Thursday, a little before the law allowed, and it could not have waited any longer, not even an hour. What the deuce have you been doing this morning, so long?"

Marie was about to begin the account of her morning.

"But I did not tell you; I have a letter from Hubert."

"Ah, what a joy! Where is it?"

M. de Clairepée finished the partridge wing which he was eating, poured himself a glass of white wine from his vineyard of Haute-Garigue, then, feeling in his pocket and looking at Marie with an air as if to say, "You shall see, you shall see," he took out of its envelope a hastily written letter, but signed with that rising, energetic signature underscored by a heavy line, "Hubert." He read it, stressing the words:

"My dear Father, my dear Sister,—We are in Belgium. I have no news of the rest of the army. We are going forward all the time, so that we shall be in action against the enemy, who is said to be advancing on every side. But, so far, nothing but triumphal passages through villages. The poor things thought they would be crushed, but the good French

cavalry is advancing steadily, straight at the enemy. We scarcely sleep, and our horses are already worn out. As for us, our hearts keep us up. As we pass through, they offer us something to drink, and we drink without leaving the saddle. 'Hurrah for the French! Look out for the Germans; they say that they are on the right and the left of us, but now that you are here it is all right. Have another glass.' The colonel himself, before us, accepted a glass of beer which a handsome Flemish girl, still more blond than you, Marie, but of a blond in which there was more sun—is it not curious?—offered him, laughing. It is cool. In the sky there is a pale star from which light falls, but it is not ours. The men of the country complain of the heat. If they knew our *garigues* at midday! And we must go on. I can hear the cannon, and I shall soon tell you that I have received my baptism of fire. I have seen wounded men passing in big automobiles. Yesterday we were at Bouillon; to-day we are at Neufchâteau. Good-by, my dear father. I kiss you and the grave Marie.

HUBERT.

P. S.—Kiss my little Maurice for his father.

"It is just like him," said Marie, whose eyelids were winking more rapidly than usual; "a great deal of energy, no complaints, and a supply of hope which no mishaps can exhaust."

"We have been like that, Marie, for eight centuries."

"It is not we alone; it is the country. I was struck by the words, the bearing, the expression of some of the young men here, poor and unknown, when they had to go."

"It is true," said the father, "we owe them the example, but we are not the only ones to give it.

What preserves France is that she possesses many great souls, in farms and poor houses, wherever there is a good woman and an honest man. She has fine sons everywhere. Her chief strength lies in her middle classes, her families of straitened means, religious and united."

They talked of the absent one during the rest of breakfast. It was a subject on which one could talk indefinitely with Marie. They recalled together—are recollections really complete unless shared with some one else?—Hubert's great grief at leaving the army a year after his marriage. Hubert's wife, elegant, rich, capricious, and whom he loved passionately, had asked this sacrifice of him without considering, being very young, the almost infinite obligations which she took upon herself in depriving her husband of a profession for which he was made. Too acute not to understand the lesson of life, she had soon commenced to see that love, even tender and devoted, that the intellectual resources of a woman, even an intelligent one, do not replace all that she had destroyed. Then death had come, shortly after the birth of Maurice. The "young lady," as they said at St.-Baudile, had left in the heart of her husband, of some relatives, and of many who had met her only casually, a regret such as is not always insured by a long life. She had been a dazzling joy of the past and she was still called to the family councils of the present. How often was her name mentioned! It was spoken again

that morning in the dining-room of L'Abadié. They said:

"Poor child! How proud she would have been to-day of her husband, and happy, in spite of her anxiety, to know that he is in the army, among his former comrades, and catching up with his belated rank."

"I have no doubt that he will come back at least a captain, Marie, and, above all, for that is the important thing, that he will do his duty well."

"Modestly, after his manner."

"Ardently; it was always our way."

"The two things go together. What a handsome cavalryman he must be, with his steel-gray eyes searching for the enemy!"

"The Clairepée eyes."

"So kind when he looked at us! His men must love him."

"As we do, as every one does. See here, when he comes back, this is what we shall do—"

A ray of sun, passing between the shutters, struck the Baron de Clairepée, who did not feel the burning heat because of the great words—France, army, enemy—sounding about him.

As Marine brought in the dessert she said, "Monsieur, Verdier the gardener wants to speak to you."

Marie rose to go back to the town and the gardener came in, with his straw hat in his hand. He was a man of middle age, tanned, with black,

curly hair, with a foxlike face and shifty eyes. They were hardly ever quiet. Verdier passed in the neighborhood as the bastard of those gipsies who have been coming for nearly two thousand years to the country of the St.-Maries. He was often called for that reason "The Carack." He was also the gamekeeper, as much as that occupation can be carried on in an open country, whose inhabitants from the time of Rome, no doubt, consider as a municipal right the liberty to go over the country with a gun in their hands, to gather a bunch of grapes, to raise an arm to pick a ripe peach from a tree. *Cosa di niente.* Nevertheless, he would make a few rounds at the opening of the hunting season, and amuse himself making a noise, shooting at sparrow-hawks and magpies.

"Have a glass of wine, Verdier; this is a bottle from my Garigue vineyard."

The man went for a glass in the pantry, took a swallow, and smacked his lips.

"I have a letter from Hubert—a good one. He is in Belgium. Ah, what a pleasure it is to see a young man so earnest, so zealous!"

"Very likely, monsieur."

"Who gives up his comfort and his family so willingly."

"What of it? It is what he likes. And besides, Monsieur Hubert has the money to do it."

"How, the money? He has the spirit. Money has nothing to do with it."

The man pursed up his lips and shook his head like those who refuse to acknowledge the truth of a statement, and went on: "I only wanted to say, monsieur, that I cannot go on living as I do. Everything is getting dearer. I can't continue to bring up my family with the eight hundred francs that you give me."

"Two children, Verdier."

"They eat like five, like six, perhaps. And I can't give them dessert every day, as you do."

"Bah! As you make your rounds you don't deprive yourself of the pleasure—and I forgive you—of picking up under a tree a handful of almonds, a couple of apricots, or a few pears or apples which belong to me or my farmers."

"Things of no importance."

"I agree."

They looked at each other for the time of a lightning flash, and their eyes said clearly that this was an old quarrel.

Monsieur de Clairepée had lived too long in the country to risk a proposition. He knew that there concessions can never be withdrawn, and he wanted to gain a few minutes for reflection. He filled his pipe slowly, lit it, went and closed the shutter, for the beam of light annoyed him now, and then sat down and said:

"Verdier, I can do something for you. I will raise your reward fifty centimes for killing foxes and badgers and birds of prey."

"I kill only a dozen a year, monsieur! At ten

sous apiece you would give me a raise of six francs. Really, it won't do."

Monsieur de Clairepée frowned and remained for some seconds without answering, troubled by the need of coming to a decision and by the probable consequences of that decision. His amiable nature, his habit of conciliation, a little southern craftiness, caused him to move his chair closer to the gamekeeper's.

"Come, Verdier, be reasonable."

But the gardener drew back the same distance, sliding his chair over the floor. It became evident that before coming in he had made up his mind.

"Come, Verdier, you have been at L'Abadié for twelve years."

"Twelve years of poverty. I have counted them."

"I am not rich, and the war is going to diminish my income in more than one way. In spite of everything, I might add fifty francs."

"Ah no! What would I do with fifty francs?"

"What you would have done with a hundred francs if I gave them to you. Is it settled?"

The man rose, hard, full of contempt for the man who ought to have been rich but was not.

"Monsieur, you can have your garden made and your lands watched by any one you like, but not by me."

M. de Clairepée looked at him as he was already turning away and opening the door.

"There are no poor except among the game-

keepers," said he, with a slight trembling in his voice. "I hope you will have good luck somewhere else! When shall we go over accounts?"

"The day after to-morrow," said the man as he closed the door.

M. de Clairepée felt wounded by this man's leaving, which he could regard as an act of ingratitude, because he had always treated his household with kindliness, and he found it hard to understand that a matter of money could cause his people to leave him when he needed them. It also seemed to him that this was only the beginning, and that the war was going to change his manner of life. So he said, half aloud, "The world is going to be turned upside down; nobody stays in his place any more."

He went into the large drawing-room, which he found empty. A bouquet of wild carnations on the table in a glass vase reminded him of the absent Marie. The framed photograph, leaning against a pile of books, of a young dragoon officer, with earnest eyes and a mustache as light as Marie's hair, increased his trouble. He wondered whether it would not be a good thing to open the manuscript, contrary to his habit, which was never to write during the day, and lose himself for an hour in the lives of his ancestors, in order to forget his own, which was becoming gloomy. But he had not the heart even for this. So he closed the shutters, as he did every summer day, during the heated hours, and, having shut up

the little coolness retained by his Abadié, heated by the midday sun, went up to his room, lay down on his bed, with the windows closed, and took a nap "to give himself courage."

Marie, during this time, was working in the hospital at St.-Baudile. Aided by two slender Provence lads, who went up and down the stairs swiftly and as by enchantment on their silent grass sandals, she hung percale curtains on the rods which they had fastened to the walls, so that the light and heat should not be too trying for the wounded men who were coming, those whom the medical authorities had "promised." There was nobody in the hospital thus far, as the directress said, but accident cases—that is, soldiers from the rear who had sprained their ankles or cut their hands or bruised a shoulder in working in the neighborhood. Marie already wore, of course, the Red Cross uniform, and only a few blond locks, which she said were unruly, escaped from the headdress and revealed the color of her hair. As she was getting down from the ladder on which she had been perched for an hour, she heard behind her the solid but still active step of the directress, and turned around.

"Ah, my dear, what heat!" said the most musical voice of the south, a powerful and well-trained contralto. And Mme. Deguiller de la Move held out her two moist hands to her young friend.

"We are getting on. But what heat! I thought

I should die of sunstroke crossing the court. Happily our wounded have not come yet."

She sat down and made Marie sit down beside her on a bed which had its quilt smooth and well tucked in, and, looking at her with a protecting admiration, said:

"I have the reply from Paris."

Emotion suddenly heightened the color in Marie's cheeks.

"Well, madame?"

"The application is laid over."

"I am not going to the hospitals at the front? They have refused me?"

As she said this she turned quite white.

"Not at all, my dear. We are only at the beginning of the war. Your very generous offer will no doubt be accepted later. For the present, thank Heaven, you remain with us. How upset you are!"

"It is true. When one has such a brave brother, to be only rational—"

"Consecrated, you mean, in another service, but just as trying in the long run, believe me. Come and fold linen with your head nurse; it will calm your mind."

They walked side by side, the one somewhat stout, the other taller and more slender, but both of them charming, through the passage between two rows of beds; then, turning into the right wing of the old abbey, they shut themselves up in a vaulted room, furnished only with tables

ranged around the walls, and on which were piled bundles of linen still in the cloth coverings in which they had been packed.

Mme. Deguiller de la Move, of a good bourgeois nobility, was the rich, childless, impulsive, and kindly wife of a former magistrate twenty years older than herself. He had formerly had a certain number of general ideas, of the sort which one finds in other men's books, and, having taken to writing, had entered the competitions of various academies. Having been crowned a first time, M. de la Move, like so many others, had had printed on his visiting-cards these words: "Laureate of the Institute." The same good fortune befell him again, and some one said, "Why, my dear sir, you are a *bilaureate*." The good magistrate was growing old; he had printed a hundred cards with this inscription: "Bilaureate of the Institute." He kept the nickname. For some years he had been subject to over-fatigue of the intellect. For weeks he lived without thinking, to use his own expression. It was not, perhaps, a very heavy sacrifice for his wife to leave her own house and go to live altogether at the hospital of St.-Baudile. But she was a devoted, a warm, and an intelligent friend who, because of the unhappiness in her own home, of which she never spoke, was secretly drawn by the sufferings of others. As she folded the linen with Marie and piled it on the table, she assumed, to comfort this new sorrow, a vivacity of argument, apt

phrases, tones of voice, and even play of expression which made her a closer comrade of Marie. She made her understand that the probable length of the sacrifice would increase the merit of something which the young girl considered easy, and that to perform hospital duty, simple and prolonged, demands as much courage as the profession of arms. "Ah, my child," she said, "unending weariness makes many an unknown saint."

When she got back to L'Abadié that evening Marie said nothing to her father. He would have been upset by the idea that he had almost lost Marie after Hubert. If she were called later she would tell M. de Clairepée a few days in advance—not many days. She had decided on this a long time ago; she had said to her old friend, who agreed with her, "Our courage needs a little of the element of surprise, don't you think?"

The father and daughter came down together from the first story into the vestibule, and from there went out on a terrace a dozen steps in width, on which yellow and red purslane grew in the exhausted sand and especially along the walls. One had to go up three steps into the garden, properly so called, laid out in a depression of that plateau of rocks and flinty earth which shuts off the plain to the east of the village. One could see from there, high up on the left, the protecting hedge of cypresses. For eighty years now they had defended the domain. In spite of their age their foliage had not turned yellow nor had their

stems bent; only, their tops had inclined toward the south, flexible perches on which the migrating birds rest for a minute, erect, with their thighs outside of their feathers. On the other side of the garden grew pomegranates with the thickest foliage in the world. The beds between the two were neglected. Some peach-trees, exposed to the full force of the wind, raised their scrawny branches above a few vegetables and many weeds, in the old terraces which were well settled down and very rich. At the end of this inclosure the wall had been broken down for more than six meters, an old breach which had never been rebuilt. M. de Clairepée and his daughter, climbing over the fallen stones and bearing away to the left, reached the Grande Garigue, which was at least fifty meters wide, and which the old men remembered as all striped with lines of vines. There was nothing left now of the vineyard of old days except a narrower strip, in spots hesitating to live, which ended in a point toward the south-east. The rest was pebbles, roots, briers, flowers, wild shrubs, what Provence names by an antique word, *ermas*, uncultivated, the desert. At the end of the vineyard began the olive-trees, thin, too, whose sparse foliage did not prevent one from seeing through it the gray of the rocks or the tawny soil. Backward, as they looked over St.-Baudile, the view was beautiful, especially for those whose horizon it had been since childhood. Marie and her father went on some

distance by the paths, and soon sat down, one after the other, facing the village, from which came now and then the sound of a voice or of a door slamming violently. For there was a high wind, and clouds were racing across the sky.

"Marie," said M. de Clairepée, "I must tell you that things are not going well with France."

"I knew it from the first wounded who arrived this morning. But we have had too much to do, and I have not had time to read the newspapers."

"I brought you here that I might tell you what has happened. We are alone. You see, when I speak of France and pity her I am always afraid that some one may hear me and think that I am doubtful about her."

"Ah, doubt her? Never! We may have defeats, but they will be avenged."

"I believe it. Still, I must tell you; the Germans have captured Liège."

"That is old news."

"Old because the war goes at a gallop; that was thirteen days ago, the seventeenth of August."

"Yes, but that same day the British troops landed in France!"

"On the twentieth the Germans entered Brussels also. On the twentieth, too, we were beaten at Sarrebourg, in our dear Lorraine, and our troops retired to the Grande-Couronné of Nancy. Finally, the day Brussels fell there was a great battle at Charleroi, and we lost it. On the twenty-fifth they destroyed Louvain."

"Don't tell me so much. Is there anything more?"

"Alas! the fortress of Longwy fell three days ago. Maubeuge was invested two days ago, and now, from what the officers say—I had a talk with two of them this morning at the station—our armies are in full retreat. Where will they stop?"

The young girl turned quickly toward him.

"And Hubert? His letter was so cheerful! What will be the next?"

"He is in the wave which is retreating, unless—I do not want to think of that. And then, you see, when there is a disaster it is not of one's sons that one must think, it is of the Sovereign Mother. My great grief is her."

Marie, with her hands folded on her knees, looked for a long time at the horizon of the plain, and the light which was dying away in the stillness. Then she held out her hand to her father and said:

"I am sorry not to be a man and able to join them up there."

They remained silent for some time, thinking of the same things, and trying to master their grief, in order not to increase each other's. It was the father who first regained complete control of himself.

"Marie," said he, "these great public disasters ought to make us love each other the better, and do the little daily tasks better. I am glad that you devote yourself, as you do, to your work as a nurse. When did the wounded arrive?"

"Five came this morning; I thought I told you."

"Where do they come from?"

"From the north, I think. Madame de la Move had charge of them. I had to go on errands all day; we are short of many things for them. I learned only that their morale was good."

"We, too, are wounded; let us be like them. I had an idea—"

"What is it?"

"It was partly to tell it to you that I brought you here. From to-morrow I shall be a stretcher-bearer in your hospital. It is a modest position, but somebody has to fill it."

"Ah, that is fine!"

"No, it is not much, but I cannot do anything more."

Marie drew her father's head toward her with both hands and kissed him. There came the sound of a siren from the south.

"Do you hear that?"

Marie replied: "I forgot to tell you; the shell-factory opened to-day, beyond St.-Baudile, near Réal. Clarens has converted his oil-factory. I do not know who lent him the money—probably the government. Workmen have come, men and women; any one can get in there."

"Clarens is one of the good-for-nothings of the neighborhood; anyhow, he comes from the other south. I will forgive him if he makes good shells. The war is such a good time to forgive! Every one is suffering."

Marie shook her head and said, very low, "Do you think so?"

They remained a short half-hour in the *garigue*, trying to talk as in happy times, but they made an effort not to appear preoccupied. They sought for things to talk about which were not gloomy, and ended by being afraid of silence or pauses in their conversation.

The sun was setting; the penetrating odor of the new-mown fields and the hot stones began to travel in the evening breeze. M. de Clairepée and Marie returned to L'Abadié almost without a word. Marie called up her brave smile when she said to her father on the threshold of the old house, as if they had never spoken of anything else:

"You cannot know what pleasure you have given me by promising to serve our soldiers with me."

Maurice ran to her with all the speed of his little four-year-old legs. He came from the court-yard next the road, and had come through the house.

"Aunt Marie, play with me."

He held up his arms, begging her, ready either to laugh or to cry. He was a nervous child, self-willed and loving. Marie felt sorry for his being alone, and, to give him the illusion of having a big sister, let him have his way very often.

So she went back to the garden with him, played wolf, danced, sang, got in a perspiration

like a schoolgirl, and then, when the dinner-bell rang, took him up in her arms and carried him in, the child who had found his nest between the shoulder and the neck of his aunt, and who asked:

"Aunt Marie, you must promise me."

"What is it now?"

"Always to play with me."

"I promise."

"Even when you are old?"

"Yes."

"When you are—"

"How old?"

"When you are thirty!"

Marie replied for the last time, with her face turned toward the child's cheek, "Yes, Maurice, I promise always to play with you, even when I am old."

And the child, in his delight at being understood, kissed her passionately, to thank her.

VI

THE SONG OF THE RED WINE

AT Masevaux they were downcast, too. The news of the retreat of our armies had spread there as in France, but how much greater must the anxiety be among those who were the stakes in the game, who expected that victory would give them the right to be French for always.

Madame Ehrsam was among those in whom the first successes of the French had raised indefinite hopes. Precise, reserved, industrious, she had worked every day at the factory, solely concerned, it seemed, with the affairs of the business. She had told no one of her hopes, nor, shortly afterward, of her disappointments. It had already been hard for her to learn that the French, having captured Mulhouse, had been driven out of it once, then a second time, after a second offensive and an occupation of a few days. At present, no doubt, the three recovered Alsatian valleys, Dannemarie, Masevaux, and Thann, were beginning to live again like Frenchmen. No one hesitated any longer, among those whose hearts were

really French, to express their hope for the defeat and punishment of the Germans, to tell about the past, full of vexations, of charges by informers, of brutal repression of the "false Germans," the "French faces," the "traitors," the Alsatians, in short, "among whom a true German feels in an enemy's country." And now the nation so long wept and waited for gave way on the field of battle, retreated before Germany. She might even be driven from the three valleys. They did not dare to think of the vengeance which would be visited on the people of Thann, Dannemarie, Masevaux, and the other towns and villages of the mountain, the people who had trusted and showed their love for France. How was it that this France, brave as it was, could not hold its first gains?

The women asked this; the men, especially the veterans, were less surprised. Even the most French by tradition let it be understood that they expected such reverses. One of them, a manufacturer, had come on business into the office in which Madame Ehrsam was working, and had said to her these simple words, alluding to what had happened in Belgium and the north of France, "These dear French have great ability, but they do not understand Germany." So Madame Ehrsam shut herself up home, never spoke of the war to her servants, and contented herself with going oftener than she used to St.-Martin's Church, on the other side of the Doller.

THE SONG OF THE RED WINE

At the beginning of September a letter arrived from France. Pierre wrote from Besançon, from where he had sent only a post-card a few days before. This letter was brought on the evening of September 3d to the house where the whole line of Ehrsams had lived faithful to France, and had splendidly employed the right of remembering.

My dear Mother,—I wrote you that after three weeks I had finally arrived at Besançon, and am settled here for a while. I am a private soldier. I am drilling, and do not see how I can be sent to the front for a long while. My comrades are younger than I. That is one cause of my being much alone among them. I do not say that they are all hard on me because I was not born in France, but from certain remarks as well as from certain silences I have only too often realized that they have not adopted me.

I know this town on the Doubs, built in a curve of it, caught in a net by it, damp with its fog when the wind does not blow from Mont Rognon or Mont Rapon. I know the winding road up to the citadel, the Chamars walk before the prefecture, where I have been bored more than once, and the forest on the hillside of Chaudanne, the forest on the other side of the river, like ours, where I go to think of Alsace. The beginning of my apprenticeship is hard; the apprenticeship of France is not an exception. I am watched! Yes, mamma, I am watched! Do not cry out at this. I know it, I feel it, they distrust the Alsatian. You can guess how cruel this is for me, your son, the son of Louis Pierre Ehrsam, who was all his life, after eighteen-seventy, suspected by the Germans. Who will trust us? Spied on by the Germans, suspected by the French, what a part we play! And what a reward we have!

I say nothing which I cannot prove. My heart is full of

anger. Did you receive my first letter, written on my knees, between Belfort and Besançon? I told you that I had hardly crossed the frontier when I was arrested by a post of customs officers and at once shut up in a barn, under the charge of one of them. A young man who comes from Alsace, to enlist in the French army! They make him prisoner!

After keeping me several hours, they wanted to send me to Felon, to a general who never knew about it. An officer whom I met said that I ought to go to Belfort. What do you think of this counter-order, and why did they not know exactly what they ought to do in my case? The Germans would not have hesitated. At Belfort I first waited at the gate of the town while they telephoned about me, then, accompanied by an armed soldier—I must admit that he was a jolly fellow and confident of the result of the war, but he would look at me once in a while with his suspicious peasant's eye—I went to an office where several officers and secretaries were at work, and I did not see that exact discipline which I had been accustomed to see since I was a child. The chief was writing and did not raise his head.

"What is it?"

"An Alsatian deserter, sir, who wants to enlist."

He did not even look at me. After ten minutes the officer turned his attention to me. He knew German, and asked my name and why I had come to France from Alsace. I replied to him in French. He was astonished, as though it was an unusual thing, in truth, for people of Masevaux, and of our condition, to know French. When the interrogatory was finished the commandant said:

"Ehrsam, it was a mistake to send you to Belfort as the place where you can enlist. You will take the first train for Besançon."

I suppose there must have been several trains between then and the time I started, for I left only on the twentieth day of the mobilization. I learned afterward that it was only on this date that our enlistment could be received.

At Besançon, which really was the place where we were to enlist, I was confronted with one of our compatriots, a civil interpreter, of whom I soon found that we had various acquaintances in common. He asked me, to be sure of my Alsatian dialect, whether I had hunted in Alsace, how we obtained our permits, where we stopped for dinner after hunting. Then I filled out a form in which I figured under two names, my own of Ehrsam and another which I bear at least officially; your son, mamma, is now called Pierre Lancier. After a medical examination I finally signed at the town hall my enlistment in the Foreign Legion for the term of the war. The paper, which I signed boldly, closed with these words:

"Asks his reinstatement in his French nationality, to which he has a right through his present enlistment. Declares that he has been informed of all the consequences which may result for him from this enlistment, contracted as an unnaturalized Alsace-Lorrainer." At once I became a French citizen, and immediately, as I had the right, I declared that instead of joining the Legion in Africa I meant to choose a corps in France, and I chose the Fifth Battalion of *chasseurs à pied*, whose depot is at Besançon. It is a crack regiment; I shall have to win my promotions, and more slowly here than elsewhere. I cannot tell you, above all, I do not wish to tell you, that I regret what I have done, but it was not received as I hoped it would be. Moreover, I find that these French are full of illusion. They think that everything can be improvised. They do not know their enemy, for lack of study and of seriousness, and if you tell me that this is from generosity of character, I would tell you that it is the result, rather, of frivolity. They are inexcusable, having been for forty-four years face to face with a growing danger, for not having studied the means of warding it off or of not being crushed by it.

Further, I wish to tell you that this people is not united; superficially, no doubt, and for the moment, they exhibit a kind of union which they call national or sacred, but there

is vanity everywhere, and envy. They cultivate it, as one would cultivate a vegetable. I have not observed everything, I do not know much about these people who are now my family, but I am afraid of what I divine in them. What will they do against an empire whose chiefs have hearts of reinforced concrete, it is true, but which suffers no insolence of parties, which makes use of every one in turn, and finds them fawning, terrified, purchasable, at bottom more German than Christian or human? How many here are harebrained, undisciplined? They manufacture them! You see the beginning. Is it certain that liberated Alsace, as they call it, will not return to the slavery of five weeks ago—and how much worse? What will become of you? I think of it, and I cannot tell any one with what anguish; they would think me a traitor. It is bad enough not to be considered a Frenchman of the first quality. And why am I not one? Because we have struggled all our lives for France, who had ceased to defend herself, who took pleasure in killing herself, like a morphine addict, and who took so little care of her friendships beyond the frontier that she is astonished, and is not very sure who we are, when we appear in her recruiting bureaus, to ask for our right of Alsace-Lorrainers and a gun to fight the Germans.

As I write this letter in haste I say to myself that perhaps you will not understand me, but that is because you have never been in France except for your wedding journey, and once or twice for the review of the Fourteenth of July. I have begun to live here, I suffer, and, whatever you may think of it, I tell you.

Madame Ehrsam had gone that day up on the mountain in the direction of Huppach, where the Chapel of the Virgin is, a celebrated place of pilgrimage for centuries. She did not go there as a pilgrim, but to examine a planting of fir-trees which her sons had made there on the edge of a

large wood which belonged to them. Having seen everything and talked to the woodmen and the farmers of the mountain farms, she came back, with her heart full of those stories which are told only to friends in rural districts, but especially in Alsace. They were the recollections of liberated captives, who still dread lest the pitiless master should come back. They had spoken ill, to their hearts' content, of the Prussians, of the former gendarmes of Masevaux, especially of the head guard of the forest, whose luxurious dwelling was at the top of the Grande Rue, who had disappeared first of all the officials, as soon as the approach of the French had been announced. As she walked down she went over in her mind her whole life, for which France and Germany had each striven, and what she knew, by tradition, of the Ehrsams and the Riffels, who had chosen and served France without failure and on every occasion. She said, "One of my two sons serves our enemy, against his will, I know; the other, the one who most resembles his father and me, has not mistaken his way." It was on her arrival at nightfall that she found on the table in the dining-room, at the right of her plate, its habitual place, the letter, which had arrived by the second delivery. She read it while the waitress was present, and nothing in her face could reveal what she thought. The servant asked, in Alsatian:

"Is Monsieur Pierre well, madame? Is he happy?"

The mother replied, in an indifferent tone: "Yes, Anna, very happy. Bring me my ink-stand and blotting-paper."

Never before, perhaps, had the mistress of the old Masopolitan factory hesitated before writing the words "My dear Pierre" or "My dear Joseph." Without pausing, with a clear and regular hand-writing, her pen always followed the dictation of a well-ordered mind, an accurate memory, a heart which infallibly found the right word. This time Madame Ehrsam thought, "I will not call him 'dear'; he does not deserve that—no!" Then she quickly wrote these words:

Your brother is still at Mulheim, with his regiment. He hopes not to be sent to the French front.

I have received your letter. I shall burn it in a little while, when Anna has finished her work. It is the first time that an Ehrsam has blasphemed France. I do not know it well, it is true, but neither do you. But I am sure it is different from what you say. I feel it from the pain which you give me.

Your mother,

SOPHIE EHRSAM, NÉE RIFFEL.

That night, while the cannon thundered on the chain of mountains which borders the great plain, golden, vine-covered, where flows the Rhine, the mother of the two sons with the two countries thought for a long time. She did not weep, although she was alone in her room. She had opened the window; the rumbling of the French

pieces brought back to her memory the long years when the Germans insulted, beat, imprisoned without reply—the days of the silent hatred. She felt a sort of joy at finally hearing the concert of steel throats thundering against the executioners of Alsace; she murmured to herself, "That is for your cruelties; that is for your hypocrisies, your lies, your blackguardly contempt, your imbecile and brutal laughter; these are the dead who are revenging themselves. You will be driven out! Fire, Frenchmen! Good! Good! Don't be discouraged! Drive them out!" She went on: "I wish Pierre were with those who are fighting! I am less sure of his mind than of his heart. In battle, it is the soldier's heart which speaks."

When she had thought that the wish which she had formed appeared dreadful to her, and she tried not to think of her son any longer.

Not far away, the farm of Baerenhof seemed to sleep, on the hillock which looked down on the road to Ribeaumont. No light shone through the cracks of the shutters, but two people were watching beside the cradle of the first-born of Anne-Marie Reinhardt. She had thrown a little wood on the dying embers in the large room where she had carried the cradle, to put the child to sleep. For although it was only the beginning of September, there were gusts in the mountains which bring the cold of a storm from a great distance. One of these icy currents was passing over Masevaux, and above the cannon hidden in

the forests the clouds arrived in great armies, hiding the full moon. The clock in its wooden case counted the flight of the seconds. There was nothing left in the fireplace but bits of fagots, red at the end like cigars, which had fallen outside of the bars of the andirons and winked in the wind which blew in and shook off their ashes. Louise sang, in an undertone, a song formerly forbidden—she had a deep and captivating voice:

"When that time shall have come
I do not know whether there will be snow on the pines
Or if the raspberry will be ripe,
But I will go into my house
And with my friends, my good friends,
I will drink red wine."

In the corner of the fireplace there was a figure doubled in two. Then it moved slowly, and beside the cradle and the mother the young and vigorous bust of Antoine Reinhardt, her young brother-in-law, turned, and in the feeble light Marie could see the full, eager face whose eyes shone because she had sung a song against the German, she had spoken of red wine, the French wine. She went on:

"Listen, little mother,
For that day you can prepare already
An onion pie.
Put plenty of flour in the sides.
There will be many of us to eat it,
And our hearts will be so happy."

"You can sing that now, sister Anne-Marie, but only six weeks ago there would have been a Schwob on top of the chimney to listen to you and to denounce you."

The smile of Anne-Marie was like another little light which glowed and then went out.

"In the forests of dear Alsace,
And in the plain, here come
New hunters who came no more.
They came no more, and everybody called them,
'Come into our houses, little hunters!'
Having the same sort of hearts makes people friends."

The young lad rose; he was already tall, because of his long horseman's legs, and although the features of the face were not yet entirely formed in this boy of fifteen, one could recognize in him the daring race, the military Alsace, silent and faithful.

The child was asleep. The time seemed to have come for carrying out a plan which Antoine must have been thinking of for several days. He placed his hand on the shoulder of his sister-in-law, and, indeed, he was the protector of this young woman, whose husband had gone into France the first night of the war.

"I cannot leave you without news of your father and your brothers at Heimsbrunn; it is a good night for traveling."

"You will go?"

"My bicycle is ready; I oiled it before supper;

I know, from some of my comrades, that one can still get through the country in that direction, which is in the hands of neither the Germans nor the French, and go into the villages. There are no trenches. I know the roads and, I really believe, every tree. Why do you suppose they should bother me? I am not old enough to be a soldier."

She reflected, a little bent forward, looking at her sleeping daughter as though to ask her advice. No doubt it was hard to have no news of her father and mother, of Charles and Edmond, of Eugénie and Valentine, all the more because the French had twice occupied Heimsbrunn, and many imprudences, alas! might have been committed by the Judlins. The German never forgives those who welcome the French. What had become of the farm? Had they got the hay in, and begun to thresh the wheat? But this lad, this heroic little heart was it not exposing him to too much danger?

Anne-Marie carried away her daughter, asleep in her cradle; she could be heard, for several minutes, in the next room, moving a chair, drawing a curtain, arranging everything in the order established by mothers of all times, of all countries. Then she came back to Antoine, kissed him tenderly, and said:

"Tell them not to worry about me; we are very happy here with the French. As for Victor, I have already had two letters from him. He is

happy, too. He even said, in his last, that the war would not be long."

She drew a photograph from the pocket of her apron.

"Here is the picture of my daughter. It will please my mother, and Valentine, too; she was to have been godmother. But now we must wait a little while, long enough for our French to win."

The young man put the photograph in the pocket of his jacket, went to get his cap from the front hall, passed through the kitchen, and went out on the hillock, where the wind was blowing. He had no fear; he had acquired the habit of outwitting the German from childhood. The idea of possible danger excited him; he was like those volunteers whom the captain calls for for a dangerous errand, and who reply, with a thrill of bravery in every drop of their blood, "I, Captain!"

The trip was longer and more trying than Antoine had expected. He went down along the line of the railroad, between the factories, the stone-quarries, the workmen's dwellings, to the place where the valley of Masevaux begins, and resembles, from the great plain, a ditch between two buttresses of the Vosges. He had several times gone over the road, which, passing through Lauw, Sentheim, Guewenheim, and Pont d'Aspach, runs first across a naked plateau, between meadows and fields planted with fruit trees, then goes through lowlands, swamps, and thickets, the

country of the affluents of the Rhine. Until he had passed Guewenheim, Antoine Reinhardt took no precautions and thought only of going as fast as possible and keeping clear of ruts and stones. But beyond this last village the seven kilometers of road which remained might belong to the Germans as well as to the French. Every day patrols of soldiers were seen looking for each other, skirmishing a little and then retiring. Upright on his bicycle, his head high and his eye on the watch, trying to penetrate the darkness, with its different shades, which flowed about him, the young man slackened his pace when he saw before him, like a cliff, the great wood which on the right touches the Schuler. It seemed to him that a flash of light—a match, an electric torch?—had shone a hundred meters away in the underbrush.

He went forward a little, got cautiously off his bicycle, and hid in a clump of hazel and young willows which projected from the edge of the forest on the side of the mill and, in the faint light which fell from the sky, seemed to be in bloom. Very soon the sound of a mounted troop, the horses' feet hammering on the causeway, showed him that his precaution was wise. Some thirty Uhlans, having, no doubt, come through paths in the wood, appeared in double file and halted at the command of their chief. They dismounted. Some went to the mill, built in the fields a hundred meters from the road, among

the first clumps of trees. For an hour their voices could be heard in the rooms and storerooms, and there were lights which suddenly shone on one floor or the other between the leaves and then went out. The Germans were making a search in the mill. Some cavalrymen joined the others; then they all came back to the road, talking loudly; then the whole troop rode back.

Antoine waited a long time before leaving the shelter of the clump of hazel-bushes. When he went through the wood one would have said that peace had returned to the world. A little wind in the treetops, the croaking of the frogs saying farewell to summer in the warm September nights, were the only murmurs in the darkness. Farther on the little station and the two inns of Pont d'Aspach lay asleep. As he passed along the wall of the Moulin des Trappistes, farther on, Antoine raised his eyes to the niche where the statue of the Virgin, painted in blue and red, looked down on those who passed. He was afraid of being stopped by the "Halt!" of one of those horsemen, who might have left one wood only to search the next. Indeed, having listened again with his ear to the ground, before entering the forest region which begins again not far from there, he decided to wait longer, then to turn into the paths on the right, in spite of the obstacles of every sort, pushing his machine by hand. He slept in an abandoned hut, and he did not mount his bicycle again until it was bright daylight.

Far away behind him three shots rang out in the direction of Burnhaupt-le-Haut. But it was light everywhere, and with it greater boldness had returned. Anne-Marie Reinhardt's messenger pedaled more resolutely; he went as fast as he could. Soon he saw Heimsbrunn barring the horizon with its old and wide-spreading houses, one of the richest villages of that part of Alsace. A cart, drawn by two oxen and driven by a tranquil oxherd, was carrying manure into the fields below. Antoine went up the hill beside the cemetery about the church, and then turned to the right in the middle of the town. He stopped before a brown, half-open gate which gave access to the court of a farm, and wiped his sweating face. The barns and stables were at the bottom of the court. On the right rose the old and ample dwelling of the Judlins, its open beams forming X's and I's on the whitewashed walls. The shutters, painted a bright yellow, were open; the five semicircular stone steps which led to the front door had already been swept. All danger was now past. Moreover, nobody in the village had paid any attention to this bicyclist, too blond to be a Frenchman, too young to be a soldier, and who did not ask his way. The gendarme himself, whom he had met at the bottom of the hill, had only thrown an indifferent glance at the young rider.

Antoine opened the right half of the gate, but he was careful when he was in to push the wooden

bolt into the hasp on the inside, being already a man of caution, who knew that in Alsace there is never too much prudence. The court was deserted. A hay-cart, standing beside the shed at the end of the courtyard with the top of its load, soft and overflowing, even with the floor of the hayloft, proclaimed that the night before they had brought the hay of the lower fields to Heimsbrunn. Antoine entered the first room to the right and immediately there arose exclamations. "It's he! How did he get here. Ah, what luck! You could get through? Tell us about it. How is Anne-Marie?"

The voices which at first had rung out quickly became stilled because the father and mother together, who were at both ends of the table, made a sign: "Be quiet, children! You can't call out in this way here." Around the large table, where the family was breakfasting, there was the head of the farm, Judlin, a big man with a smooth face, with longish gray hair, who talked little, unless it were with his eyes, which watched everything, men and animals; at the other end the mother, delicate, slender, pale, who would have resembled a lady if she had had on a different corsage from that of linen which she wore, and fewer bits of hay in her hair, which was still very black. Then, between the father and mother, were Edmond, Eugénie, Valentine, all of them already well grown, a farm-girl and a very old farm-hand who must have fought in the war of

1870, for he was of the type and had the legendary white imperial, deep wrinkles in a narrow face, and eyes which were not very pleasant.

"Go and heat some coffee for everybody, Eugénie. This boy has had a long journey; he must eat something besides the soup; you will also bring the bottle of old brandy."

"The raspberry brandy, Monsieur Judlin?"

"Made at the farm, my boy. Well, tell us how they are at Masevaux."

While he was telling this the cannonade began again on the slopes of the Vosges. The windows shook, but except for the mother, whose eyes half closed when the detonations were louder or more frequent than usual, none of the Judlins paid any attention to this sound, which had become familiar.

Antoine felt like a person of importance, with everybody looking at him. They had brought him a plate of soup, and he answered the questions between spoonfuls. He told what had happened at Masevaux since the month of August, and more than once the same words interrupted him:

"She is happy, Anne-Marie, happier than we are."

When he had finished telling all that he knew he asked questions in his turn. Then the parents, the children, the farm-girl, often several at a time, told how the French, on their way to Mulhouse, had passed through Heimbrunn twice, and what a fine reception they had had, especially the first

time; all the past before 1870 revived, and the greeting of the fathers was on the lips of the young: "Welcome, Frenchmen! Long live France! We fed them for forty-four years; now let them go. My heart has always belonged to you." But when the French had been compelled to withdraw for the second time all the inhabitants who had shown them any friendship were denounced, prosecuted, tried, punished. One memory awoke another; it was the wail of Alsace itself which was tossed back and forth across the table by the parents, the children, the servants of that peasant but patrician family. The father said, gravely:

"How they cried out, how they complained, when they saw how we detested them! And God knows that it is their own fault. Holding all the positions, they whine as if they were oppressed."

"Yes," went on the mother, sparing in words and gestures when she spoke of that subject—"yes, we thought our last hour had come, they were so enraged against us. At once all sorts of things were forbidden: it was forbidden to stop in the streets, to go out after eight o'clock, to have the shutters closed, to light the light, to speak French. A number of people here had to point to the things which they wanted in the shops. If they opened their mouths it meant prison."

The old farm-hand grumbled, thinking it was his turn to speak: "There has been treachery, Antoine Reinhardt, even among our own people, for otherwise there would have been less suffering.

You can tell your brother when you see him, he who is fighting where I fought, that I will tell him things, and names, too."

The young people, to whom the whole cycle of Alsatian stories was as familiar as the adventures of Ysengrin or those of the evil genii were to the children of the Middle Ages, waited for the moment when their elders should be silent and allow the younger to make fun of the German. For laughter was with them the beginning of contempt, the youthful form of the animosity of the race. With shining eyes, the youngest of the Judlins, leaning over the table and laughing already at the thought that she was going to make Antoine laugh, when her mother and the farm-hand had finished talking, raised her pink nose, showed her large teeth, and said:

"Antoine, you don't know the story of the carpenter?"

"No, of course not. I was not here."

"But you know him, for he is our neighbor, at the end of the street, a man who has a little girl as old as I am, very delicate, who is my friend?"

"Go on."

"Grillinger does not like the Schwobs, and they know it. His house is like ours—they sing forbidden songs in it; once he was called before the judge for having taught his starling to whistle the 'Marseillaise.' He got off with a fine, because he said to the judge, 'Monsieur, I tried to teach him the "Wacht am Rhein" first, but he never

would whistle it.' Yes, it was funny, and I see that it amuses you, but a fortnight ago they found a paper glued to the side of his house with carpenter's glue, and on it was written a pretty compliment. I know it by heart. 'To my honored people of imbeciles. Alsace will be taken away from Germany. Germany is a collection of thieves; it is the greatest collection of rascals in the world.' Ah, the brave fellow! I will take him a bouquet when he gets out of prison."

"Bravo, Valentine!"

At that moment they heard the front gate shaken; every one was silent, and their faces turned toward the window. The little girl went to it and drew back quickly.

"The gendarme!" she said.

After a few seconds the blows redoubled, this time accompanied by imprecations in German.

"Open, you jackasses! What thick heads they have!"

The father and mother looked at each other, and it was the father who rose quietly.

"I thought," he said, in an undertone, "that the gate was open."

"It was I who pushed the bolt," said Antoine.

"Go quickly up into the haymow at the end of the court. Go through the passage; it is better for you not to be seen."

Judlin opened the door of the room and called out, as Antoine was climbing up the inside ladder into the haymow:

"Don't pound so hard. I will open the gate."

He walked slowly to the gate, making his steps sound on the stones, and opened it. One of the gendarmes of Heimbrunn, the biggest, buttoned up tight in his uniform, with his eyes full of anger, nevertheless quieted down a little when he saw the farmer. He entered, panting and shrugging his shoulders.

"See here, haven't you heard the order which has been given?"

"What?"

"To hang out your flags for the German victory! Our heroes have beaten the French so often that I don't remember the names of all their victories."

He went into the room, and the first thing which he saw was a German newspaper, the date of which he happily did not examine. It was an old copy of the *Strasbourg Post*, dated eighteen months back, and which had served to wrap up a pair of shoes. It was always placed on the table, in case of a sudden alarm.

"It is well to read the newspaper, but it would be better to put out your flag. Hurry up!"

Then pointing to Edmond, he said: "There is a lad who will soon have the honor to serve in our victorious army. Go and get the flag."

The mother immediately said she would go herself.

"He does not know where it is; I am the one who does that."

From the back kitchen, above the sink, she

brought a parcel wrapped in paper, and the two colors of Alsace appeared, red and white. She went out, while the policeman, looking at each of those who remained, said:

"It is for the victory of Charleroi, it is for the battle of Tannenberg against the Russians, it is for the capture of Longwy, it is for the great victory of the Somme, for we are now before Paris, and in eight days at the most our Kaiser will dine in the Champs-Élysées. Hoch! for our Kaiser, won't you?"

The father, the mother, the son, the daughters, with downcast eyes and expressionless faces, never answered a word.

"And yet your oldest son is in our victorious armies," said the gendarme. "You ought to show more satisfaction."

It was not the first time that he had met with this reception in the families of Heimbrunn. He swore, and went out of the door. A quarter of an hour later the father and Edmond, on top of the hay-cart, were tossing forkfuls of hay into the mow, where they were received by the old farm-hand, helped by Antoine Reinhardt.

When the workmen met again at the foot of the empty cart, red and covered with dust, they said only a few words of good-by.

"Is it possible," said the father, "that the French have been so beaten? I cannot believe it."

"No," said the mother, who came out of the house, "I cannot believe it, either. They are

always announcing victories after victories, these Schwobs, but in the end it is France who will drive them out." She went on, "To think that our oldest son, our Charles, is among them!"

Antoine, with shining eyes, replied: "No doubt, but at least the husband of your daughter, my brother, went into France at once. He has written; he is accustomed to it."

Happiness, grief, war, victories, condemnations, these were the things which filled the hearts of these poor people. The sun, shining between swiftly passing clouds, warmed the court and the walls. The head of the farm raised his eyes and said:

"The weather is going to change; you had better start, Antoine, for there is no safety for you in the inns or in the woods. May God take care of you! Kiss our daughter and her little girl for us."

They opened the gate. The flag was floating at the window which gave on the street. The cannon were thundering toward Thann. There were only two women in the street. Antoine took his bicycle and went rapidly down in the direction where France and Alsace had recovered each other. This time, too, he took precautions, hid himself, waited, set off again. As he was coming out of a wood, before Pont d'Aspach, a gun was fired. The ball whistled over Antoine. The lad had, no doubt, been taken for a deserter. He turned his head and saw no one. But when he

found himself in the open plain, a little distance from there, he dismounted. Then, as his heart was beating as though it would break, he took three good breaths before being able to sing:

"When that time shall have come
I do not know whether there will be snow on the pines
Or if the raspberry will be ripe,
But I will go into my house
And with my friends, my good friends,
I will drink red wine."

Saluting the invisible enemy who did not fire any more, the boy sprang on his machine and went on, with his heart bounding with happiness. Heavy clouds passed over the sky, the beginning of a storm.

And so, among the peasants of Alsace, the women, the children, lived the love of sweet France. They mourned for it. They had suffered for it ever since they were born. Yet not one of them knew it.

VII

THE UNFORESEEN ALLY

ON the 6th of September a letter arrived at L'Abadié. The postman had come earlier than usual. Marie was there, with her father, both of them anxious at Hubert's long silence. When M. de Clairepée held the envelope between his fingers he murmured a few words so low that Marie could not hear them. Thanksgivings? Prayers? What happiness or sorrow was there in that little folded paper which he held in his trembling hands?

"Well," he said at last, "since he is alive, as it must be good news, you shall be the first to know it. Open the letter."

To tell the truth, he did not dare to open the letter; he was afraid, but less for his son than for the news which would come of the battle.

Marie stood beside him on the steps in her nurse's costume; she took the scissors hanging at her waist, opened the envelope, and read:

"Many of my comrades have not come back; the regiment has been decimated; I escaped. I have not even a wound. I

cannot tell you where I am, but where I am we are holding. Our horses are at the rear. Do not think that it is so hard for a cavalryman to leave his horse and fight on foot; one is sure to retire less rapidly. Even the retreat has stopped now. We are facing each other. Courage is splendid. How can you imagine that a country, served in this way, shall not be saved? I kiss you.

"HUBERT."

Three days later the volunteer stretcher-bearer, the Baron de Clairepée, had carried twenty wounded from the courtyard of the hospital to the wards of the first and second stories. He was waiting in the vestibule for the arrival of the automobiles which had returned to the station and which were to bring more wounded, for, as they knew, a terrible battle had been going on for several days, and so close to Paris that they knew that it was the life or death of France which was being decided. He was standing at the left of the blood-stained stretcher. He still had on his shoulders the leather straps which were the badge of his office; beside him his comrade in the service, a merchant of St.-Baudile, did as he did, and mopped off his face. Suddenly a child, a little newsboy, ran up the front steps with a paper in his hand and cried, as he appeared in the vestibule:

"There is good news, M. de Clairepée, good news."

"Give it to me quickly."

In an instant the stretcher-bearer ran over the

communiqués of the Marne, then he placed a knee on the wood of the stretcher, unobtrusively, while his neighbor, astonished at the attitude and the silence, asked:

"What are you doing, monsieur?"

"I am giving thanks, my friend; it is worth it; we have won. See!"

And with a trembling finger, pointing to the lines of the paper, but not able to see, he recited rather than read:

"Communiqué of September 8th, 3 P.M.

"On the left wing the allied armies, including the forces engaged in the advanced defense of Paris, are advancing steadily, from the banks of the Ourcq to the neighborhood of Montmirail. The enemy is falling back in the direction of the Marne, between Meaux and Sézanne. The Franco-English troops have made many prisoners. On our center, violent fighting has taken place between Fère-Champenois, Vitry-le-François, and the southern end of the Argonne. We have not been driven back anywhere."

The other, less sensitive to any news, good or bad, less imaginative, was wondering what there was so victorious in this *communiqué*, and was divided between the desire to believe M. de Clairepée and the distrust with which he had always been filled by the impulsive nature of his friend of L'Abadié.

A nurse came down the main staircase. The merchant, little excitable by nature, called:

"Madame de la Move, is it true that we have won a battle?"

"I think so, my dear sir."

After her it was Marie who came to her father and said, "Well, it seems that things are going better."

M. de Clairepée replied: "I am still partly an officer, you know, and I can draw conclusions. It is going very well. Did you not read, 'Not driven back anywhere—advancing steadily—prisoners'? And a battle whose front extends from Meaux to Verdun! But, Marie, it means that France is saved."

Marie, astonished, timid, did not dare to believe what he said any more than the other stretcher-bearer.

"You are very sure?"

"As I am that I see you. Why are you astonished?"

"It is so fine! It does not astonish me; our Lord has always been such a good Frenchman!"

At that moment the horn of an automobile called the stretcher-bearers. Both bent over to pick up the stretcher and went down toward the wounded.

The next day M. de Clairepée said to Marie, "Neither the people at Arles nor those at Avignon illuminated their houses; maybe they will give orders at Paris."

The days went by, but France did not feel reassured, for she did not feel victorious. The blessing had come, but not the joy at the blessing. After being too unhappy, one becomes so dis-

trustful of life! One becomes so slow to believe in returning happiness!

Nevertheless, we were saved. The old gentleman knew it; the blood of his race had told him. They began to hear M. de Clairepée whistle once more in his garden when he took his walk beside the cypresses in the morning before starting for the hospital. At dinner he sent for little Maurice, whom Dido the Arlesian brought, already half asleep, and made him drink a thimbleful of the wine of the big vineyard. "To the Marne, my boy!" he said; "to your father who was in it!" The child did not understand; neither did Dido. When they had left the room the master of L'Abadié said to Marie:

"The bells which rang the alarm ought to ring for the glory of the Marne. They do not do their duty, Marie! They have not all the education they ought to have. What is victory? A beautiful girl like you, who goes before us. In order that she may rejoice our hearts, it is necessary that we should see her. Victory, Marie, is a very powerful word, but it must be felt by the heart."

Marie replied, "I seem to hear Hubert."

He belonged thoroughly to France, that Hubert de Clairepée, who found in the war the whole of French youth—movement, adventure, danger, the chance to distinguish himself, the opportunity to be wholly honest with himself, in harmony with his whole faith and his whole lineage. In action

he was freer than others; the bonds of love which had bound him to the world were broken. What did it matter to him what position he filled, the place where he fought, death itself? From the outset he had sworn never to ask for anything, to be a man without will, or even desire, in opposition to an order which he had received.

He and his comrades were now returning toward the north. A new danger was threatening France, and only a few among the men of war began to perceive it. After our victory of the Marne, the whole enormous army of invasion, having turned about, was retiring, spurred on by fear, when it perceived that the French would not arrive in time to profit by their victory. Then it reformed; at the same time, at the call of its chiefs, new army corps came out of the forests of Germany. The German abandons the dream which he had nearly realized—of entering Paris; he goes to the north, in order to turn the left wing of the French troops, to cut off the retreat of the soldiers of Belgium, to capture Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, and finally to cannonade from that point of France the detested England, the Mistress of the Seas. So far as can be, he conceals the great movement; in order that we may not follow him he continues to attack us on the Oise. We hold him with great difficulty. Who will go to meet him at the point where he threatens? On the 4th of October General Joffre made Foch commander-in-chief of the armies of the north;

the only order which he gave him was, "Do what is necessary; do for the best." In fact, when one thinks of it, they are the words of a king to his prime minister, in whom he has confidence. Foch immediately left headquarters in an automobile. At five o'clock in the morning on the 5th of October he woke up General Castelnau at Breteuil and said to him, "Hold fast." A little later he passed through Aubigny and said to General de Maudhuy, "Do the same thing, and hold fast." Then, in the level country, he establishes his post of observation and command at Doullens. The information which he receives would make an ordinary chief tremble. He has around him almost no troops to defend an immense region; a few battalions in garrison here and there, some English regiments disembarking at Boulogne or Havre. There is, indeed, the Belgian army; it is coming, but in confusion. The 9th of October the Germans enter Antwerp; they pursue the Belgian divisions, they send along the seashore, by Bruges and Ostend, more than four army corps to beat down and surround those feeble forces or to take possession of the upper end of France, back of Calais.

What hours! It is learned that the German Prince of Bavaria has written an order of the day which closes in this way, "The thing now is not to let the war drag on with our most detested enemy; the decisive blow remains to be struck." In another military proclamation General von Dem-

ling cries to the soldiers of Germany, "The breaking through at Ypres will be of a decisive importance." The Emperor, who was to have dined in Paris in August, 1914, now proposes on the 1st of November to make his solemn entry into Ypres, the cradle of Belgian liberty, and to be crowned king of Belgium in the marvelous setting of the market-place. Sire, the date is ill-chosen! You would not think of it! The 1st of November is the Feast of All Saints, of whom you know little, and the 2d is the Feast of the Dead!

The great Frenchman, who was to "do for the best," is going to build his wall, to try to stop this foaming tide. On the 16th of October he gives the order to Admiral Ronarch to occupy Dixmude and to hold it. South of Dixmude, in the neighborhood of Ypres, to close the breach through which the enemy can rush into France he has at first precisely two Territorial divisions, the 87th and 89th, which have arrived from Dunkirk. He begins to build the wall with them. They began to dig into the earth and shelter themselves behind poor ramparts of mud, these men of the old classes, thrown there to stop young, fresh, numberless armies which, not knowing that the others have been beaten at the Marne, thought that they were continuing a victory. The general asked the Belgian divisions which had escaped from Antwerp and were going across the north of Belgium to stop at the Yser and make a stand.

But on October 15th he learned that fatigue, the grief for lost battles, and the sight of fleeing families pouring into France discouraged the soldiers, who declared that they could not hold on the Yser. On the 16th General Foch, therefore, decided to go to see King Albert. He went in an automobile with M. de Broqueville, in the direction of Furnes, and the car went but slowly. It was meeting a whole people in full flight; workmen and bourgeois mingled with soldiers. As they pass, some recognize the Minister and the soldier. They salute, but they scarcely step aside. Two men, one Belgian and the other French, are in a river of grief, against the stream of which they alone are going with difficulty; in anguish at the delay which may be fatal for two nations, they arrive at Furnes toward three o'clock in the afternoon.

On the place, with its little, regular, damp paving-stones, which ordinarily sounded only under the tread of a pedestrian or the light waves of a carillon falling from the abbey tower, there were many witnesses. Especially were they collected in the angle formed by the Palais de Justice and the old town hall, built of pale-yellow bricks, the steps of which are covered by a canopy, all carved and decorated.

October 17, 1914.

My dear Marie,—I was at Furnes yesterday, with General D., who took me as aide in spite of myself, for only a short time, I hope.

He needed, he told me, a clear-headed man, able to make the longest journeys, in automobiles or on horseback, full of confidence, a sort of daredevil. He knew our family through the Troussergues, who are related to us both; in the great disorder in which things are he met me, saw me, and told me to go with him.

Consequently, I was on that exquisite place of Furnes yesterday at ten minutes to three. It seems that the King was permanently at the town hall with his staff, and my general went up alone by the winding staircase, of which I could only see the shadow, as fine and delicately shaded as in a picture by Rembrandt or in a palace of mist.

"Wait for me outside, Clairepée." I had left the car beside the Palais de Justice, and I was looking at this place, already threatened by the cannon in the distance. It was raining, a little fine rain, and with us, perhaps, everything would have looked dull. But you see, Marie, they were marvelous artists, these people of the north, builders of churches, of town halls, of the houses of guilds. I saw about me gabled houses built of hard bricks of a fine yellow which the dampness does not eat away. I was leaning against the wall of the town hall, built of blue stone, and on the other side of the place, very high in the sky, rose the square abbey tower of Saint Nicholas, which is made of red bricks, and from which one can see, it seems, a whole green Flanders, over which the war is going to pass, more sacrilegious than elsewhere. It is so well fitted for peace, this little town, and the country about it! This blue, this yellow, this red, rising so high in the sky to receive and send back the smallest ray of the rising or the setting sun, it is all fused by the fog, that maker of harmony, which never leaves these low lands; it was all chosen by architects who had the eyes of painters and who worked to replace that which is lacking, in their country, in the light of day. I remember the name of one of them, Mark Boucquet, who was the builder of that very wall against which I was leaning. I smile as I write you these things which have so little to do with the war,

and which I saw in the most tragic moment. Yet I enjoyed them. I was like a child on vacation, and do you know, you dear Provençale, that this Furnes, of which your brother caught a glimpse, is, after Sienna and Toulouse, perhaps the finest example of architecture in bricks, in bricks whole and smooth or sculptured? Yes, my dear, they carved these bricks with chisel and mallet, these jewelers of the north, who sought above all surfaces and points which would give the greatest brilliancy under the smallest amount of light. I saw other subordinate officers like myself smoking their cigarettes, motionless under the rain; others looking obstinately at the mullioned windows behind which the King was holding council in these hours of the death agony of Belgium; others, weary of waiting, went to take shelter under the loggia whose pediment, lighter than Flanders lace, rests on four small columns as straight and delicate as the stems of birch-trees; others had gone into the vestibule, at the entrance to the staircase of the town hall. There were all sorts; some French, Belgians especially, aviators, orderly officers, officers of artillery, muddy, cramped in their capotes, wearing goatskin coats with the collars turned up. They spoke in low voices and I could hear gloomy words. They said, "This may be a disaster," or, "If to-morrow there is a Belgium!"

At these words I went to them; I had to know.

I advanced toward the groups which encircled the perron, and went up the steps; they let me pass without asking me anything. I entered under the shadow of that beautiful staircase which must have seen such brilliant processions. Ah, Marie, on the steps which the King of the Belgians had gone up that morning and which he was to go down, I saw along the walls other officers, almost all young, and who came from Antwerp or Ostend or Bruges. Some had covered their faces with their hands, from fatigue and grief, others were weeping openly, no longer having the courage to conceal their tears. I sat down by one of these, a rather short man, with shaven cheeks, and lids heavy over frank blue

eyes. He had the pitiful face of a speechless son weeping for his mother. I do not know what he was waiting for, or whom; perhaps he was sitting there like a carrier-pigeon which can go no farther.

I asked him, "Are you suffering?"

He pointed to his leg wrapped up in bandages to the ankle. "Yes, a little; I will go and have that attended to later, but it is not that which is making me weep; it is my lost country."

"Why lost?"

He looked at me a moment as if I were a man who had lost his reason, shrugged his shoulders, and dropped his head in his hands. Some higher officers came down and brushed against us in passing. Others went up. We neither of us moved from our place, but he had recognized some one between his parted fingers, for he said to me, when silence had been re-established again in this sonorous space:

"Did you see him?"

"Whom?"

"Broqueville. He was with a French general; he is going to see the King. I think they are all discussing the evacuation up there. Ah, monsieur, I hope that you may never live through such moments as I am living through now."

As he was very young and not skilful in controlling his face, almost immediately after saying this there came over it a sort of smile which made his poor eyes shine through their tears.

"I will wager that you do not know the town hall."

"No."

"You cannot go in because your rank is not high enough, like me; they are up there on the first story, in the room which was hung with Cordova leather. It is magnificent, you know. The hangings are not there, and they have taken away the portraits of the Archduke Albert and his wife Isabella, our princess in the old days, for fear of those who are coming, but the decoration is still beautiful, and the ceiling, and the hood over the fireplace. It is there, before that fireplace, that King Albert is now making up his mind,

with our generals and Broqueville, to retire into France and to make room for the Hohenzollern. Poor King! he is greater than his kingdom. I am here to see him once more. When he has passed I shall go to the hospital. And to-morrow the Boches will capture me, with all the other wounded, and send me—"

He made a gesture which signified—"into unknown Germany, very far away, where I shall be lost." I tried to think of something to say, and could not. I put my hand on the boy's shoulder and said:

"What do you know about it?"

He listened, with his blue eyes fixed on mine, questioning whether I had any hope to give him; then he leaned his head against the wall, saying:

"You can't lie, either; we are lost."

A little more time passed. On the steps behind me three officers or soldiers, I don't know which, seated like us, were smoking, and I could feel the knees of one of them, who was laughing, knocking against my back. The sound of several persons coming together out of the Cordova-leather room suddenly stopped the laughter of my neighbors. My nearest companion turned his head; recognizing this time, perhaps, the voice of one of those who was coming down, I saw him lean on his left wrist and try to rise. I supported him, helped him to rise fully, and, raising his hand to his cap, he saluted. Two men were coming down rapidly; they were talking in vague terms, but with a vivacity which gave to the phrases the accent of passion. He who came second said:

"I am pleased he understood so well! You will see, they will build, build—"

The light no longer came into the staircase inclosure; it remained, very pale, in the opening of the door; the outlines of two persons, one after the other, appeared there and disappeared. I had time to remark that the second was shorter than the first and had broad shoulders. Marie, no scientist can calculate the expansive force of a piece of news;

neither walls nor commands nor distance nor the obligations of a state secret can do anything; the news passes. Hardly had the two visitors closed the door of their automobile than it came from outside, mounting the stairway, and it came also from the Cordova-leather room. Who told it? I do not know; unauthorized persons, listeners, guessers—in a few minutes the staircase was full of people saying to one another, without even lowering their voices, which the King could hear:

"Yes, the King agrees. The French general spoke; Broqueville supported him; the King has decided that they shall resist; they will resist; the troops are going to stop."

My companion, who was on his feet, said in a voice which I shall never forget, "There is still a Belgium, thank God!"

And when I wanted to answer him he was no longer there. I asked a stranger, one of those who were talking most loudly, "Who was the French general?"

He replied with a sonorous word, which filled his mouth, "Foch."

What an opportunity I had lost! This man who had the reputation of being a sort of genius, and whom I should so have liked to know, passed close enough to touch me, and I saw only the width of his back.

My general, the other, came down a quarter of an hour later. He took my arm gravely and said, "Clairepée, great things happened in my presence."

All the time of our journey home in the automobile, as soon as we stopped talking, he saw once more these great things; he took on again the expression which he had had when the King was speaking; his uplifted eyes were looking at pictures in space.

All Saints' Day, 1914.

Emperor William will not be crowned at Ypres, Marie; the marine fusileers, of whom you must have heard, away down there where you live, and the Territorials, and the cavalry which fights dismounted and is sacrificing itself, have forbidden him. The great Teutonic armies have hurled

themselves against General Foch's wall, and they have crossed the Yser, and driven back the brave but exhausted Belgian troops; the wall was carried farther back. Foch, like a great architect, planned or rather recognized its direction. It is the railway embankment from Nieuport to Dixmude. They are fighting everywhere; the battle is terrible, but we have already, we and our Belgian allies, a formidable ally. All the men of this country know it, they had fought against it for centuries, they had only to make a sign for it to come to their aid, yet they hesitated, they preferred to suffer and shed their blood. I can tell you this, Marie, now that it is done. For a fortnight I have been intrusted with several missions by my general, sometimes carrying a message to Furnes or the neighboring villages, sometimes passing a number of days and nights at Nieuport in order to give an account of so great an event, which has already transformed the conditions of the struggle. Marie, our powerful and formidable ally is the sea.

I am writing you at night, from the cellar of a house where the bottles of wine can never have been warm. Outside it is not the rain alone which is falling; shells come regularly enough through the darkness and the fog and blow up, like a matchbox crushed between the fingers, the four walls of one of those quiet homes of tradespeople, retired officers, and sailors, who have found land which is nearly dry at the end of the plain. I am writing to say good morning to you, Marie, because I need to express the affection which has accumulated in solitude, in loneliness, in danger, and also that one day Maurice may know of the extraordinary things which his father saw in October, 1914. I sometimes say to myself that after the far-off peace we will all three come here, and I will show you a land very different from our own. Yet not altogether different. You know the irrigation canals of the Durance, in which the water runs so fast all over our plain, and especially in the neighborhood of Château-Renard. The point of Flanders where I am is also furrowed by "water-cuttings," as the Flemings say, rills,

ditches, canals, rivers. But while our Durance is a swift runner and stirs up the pebbles, which it carries a long way, the Yser and I don't know how many other watercourses flow between tame banks, almost without inclination, toward the sands where the sea receives them. How often have I ridden along the Furnes Canal through the soggy fields outlined by rows of low, stunted willows. A blade of grass which falls into the water takes a whole day to make a journey of a hundred meters. Great stretches of country are at a lower level than the North Sea. It has been necessary to protect them by dikes, and to prevent, by all sorts of artificial works, these peaceful estuaries from becoming, when the tide rises a little high, roads by which it may take possession again of its abandoned territory. Almost the whole of this system of canals ends, to the right of Nieuport, in sluices which are in the shape of a bird's claw, a cock's, if you choose, with the claws stretching toward the land and the spur toward the sea.

These sluices hold a commanding position, which is watched over by a whole army of engineers and water employees, but most of these men, to whom the secrets of the water had been intrusted, have been dispersed, and the sluices, with no watchmen, are hammered, especially at night, by the German artillery. I recollect—was it not a curious coincidence?—that while preparing for my examination at St.-Cyr I enjoyed studying the history of the sluices of Nieuport, especially mentioned in the Treaty of Nymegen, and which the King of Spain obstinately refused to cede to Louis XIV. I laugh, under the regular bombardment, to hear coming back to me from the past, and sounding in the peaceful depths of my mind, the names of the plenipotentiaries of the King of France, the Marshal d'Estrades, Colbert, de Mesmes, d'Arvaux, and that of one of the envoys of Charles II, the Marquis de la Fuente, who entitled himself "Perpetual Master of Victory, Perpetual Major and Grand Writer of the City of Seville." Both Spaniards and French knew thoroughly the supreme value of which the sluices might

be to the party which had possession. The peasants, the bourgeois, the artisans of Flanders, become soldiers, hidden behind the stone of a canal or sheltered by piled-up bags of earth, remembered also. Listen to what they said. Several, mortally wounded, a few weeks ago, carried in ambulances or dying on the reverse of a trench, had pulled down the head of the surgeon or officer:

"Monsieur—we cannot hold—there are too many of them. Why not do as in the old wars?"

That was their last will and testament. Nobody dared to say this except at the moment of death, because to do so, as in the old wars, was indeed to defend the country, but also to destroy its wealth. On the 17th of October, thirteen days ago, a peasant slipped up at nightfall to the house near Ramscapelle where was the headquarters of the Seventh Belgian Brigade. After some hesitation he was admitted; he said:

"I wish to speak to the chief himself."

When he was taken to the general he revealed to him an important message, "It is possible to inundate the country, and particularly the 'Groot nordland Polder.'"

They sent him to the general headquarters at Wulpen; he would not tell his name, and went out into the night.

Now, Nieuport was threatened, the attacks were more frequent, and the General Staff was already secretly preparing the ruinous but sure defense. On the 21st of October, at eleven o'clock, Captain Thys went on a reconnaissance, and, starting from Nieuport, stole toward the bombarded sluices. He had with him Henry Geeraert, the father of eight children, a strong, brave man with a broad and immobile face, with heavy drooping mustache. Everybody who, like me, has lived at Nieuport, knows the boatman, Henry Geeraert, who has cruised through every canal of Belgium and France. These two men, alone, went out on the jetties, over paved or concrete quays, while shells exploded and balls, striking the stone or the balustrades of the sluices, made flames as they ricocheted. Sometimes erect, sometimes crawling, they reached the edge of the first canal. It was there,

twenty meters from the gates, that the cranks had been thrown. Geeraert groped for them for a long time in the mud with a boat-hook, and finally felt that the hook had taken hold of a piece of iron. He pulled out the crank with more care and more secret pleasure than if it had been half a dozen ingots of gold, but as though the Germans had suspected that some one was working against them in the dark, they directed such a heavy fire against the sluices that it was necessary to retire. A few days later, on Sunday, October 25th, as I was at Furnes, I was carried off by another officer who was coming out of the town hall. I had some information to get from him.

"Come along," he said. "I am on an errand and must hurry; you will go with me."

We went across the place together, toward the east; we turned a corner where there is an old gabled house, and the officer soon knocked at the door of a little house in the rue des Sœurs Noires.

"Good morning, Kogge."

"Good morning, Captain."

The man was of the type of the old legendary soldier, with short white mustache and chin tuft. Nevertheless, I could see, as he raised his hand to his hat, that he was a sailor or a boatman, because his right thumb was tattooed with an anchor. He was a water-guard, as I learned three days later, one of the few Belgians now in the neighborhood who knew perfectly the management of the water, the sluices, and the bridges, and the General Staff asked him to do a great and dangerous service, that of acting as guide to the sappers of the army, and to make the new dike completely water-tight, the embankment of the railway from Nieuport to Dixmude. I had dropped a few paces to the rear. Charles Kogge's wife had joined them. As her voice was distinct, I could hear what she said:

"It is hard to be here, already, Kogge; they will get you killed; nobody can stay on the sluices or on the railroad line. A father can't be replaced. Let the young ones go."

"There are none left," said the old fellow. "It is my business to go."

I came back with him and the officer as far as the entrance to the place; he never spoke unless questioned. The officer asked him:

"What do you know about the water?"

"Everything," he replied.

I left them, going about my duty as they went on theirs. But during the night of the 27th to the 28th, at three o'clock in the morning, thanks to the courage and experience of two young officers, two old men of the water service, and a squad of sappers, the first sluice was opened. The lapping of the water running in, rising and boiling, rose to the ears of the brave men who had ventured among the great sluices of Nieuport; it was the most beautiful music which they had ever heard in their lives. "Come, waters of the sea! Help us men! Destroy our trees, the remains of our houses, and make the grain-fields barren, but drive the enemy out of Flanders!" The sea did not rush in; it only pushed back the insensible current of a large canal which turned back toward its source. Little by little it flowed over into the ditches. The hour had been chosen; it was that of a high tide, and the water, slipping, insinuating itself everywhere to the east of the railway line, wetting the earth, melting the clouds, began to worry the Germans, who did not understand why the ditches began to fill with a centimeter, then two centimeters, then three centimeters of liquid mud. The officers telephoned to the generals, who replied:

"Use pumps."

They stopped the mouths of the ditches, but the ditches ran over; they brought hurdles, but they were submerged. They tried to remove their batteries, but they were stuck; and finally when they wished to hurl themselves against this little Belgian army which could no longer hold out, they perceived that the sea is a mighty power and that an oppressed people had placed it on its own side. The fishermen tell

now how, on the neighboring beaches, the water of the sea went down for one night a hand's-breadth.

A few days later at L'Abadié Farm Marie received a fourth letter from Hubert.

Marie! Marie! You can never guess what a visit I have just paid! I have had two pieces of good luck: my promotion to captain, which will please papa—it seems that I deserved promotion during the retreat and during the Marne—then a visit to Cassel with my general. That is where the general headquarters of the Army of the North is at present. Mont Cassel, as they call it here, has on its longest slope a whole line of windmills, and where the descent is steeper, to the south, a cascade of houses. Up there they are mostly old; in the plain they are old and young, and they all have blue roofs. A painter would have said that it was a blue town in green Flanders. But at present I can find hardly anybody to talk to about slates and bricks; we live in the mud. I did not know what the devil my general was going to do in that little Flemish town; he is no more loquacious than is necessary. We arrive in our automobile on the square, before the town hall. I go in with my chief, who asks to see General Foch. When we are admitted, almost immediately, he makes a sign for me to go with him, and I fancy that I owe this honor to a large bundle of papers which I took out of the auto and which I was carrying. So here I am in the presence of a great man of war, of him who has just dammed the German tide which would have swept over the whole of the north of France. I looked at him with that attention which you remember, which does not leave its object, which searches, which photographs, which retains every detail. Well, he is a "chic" man; I would scratch out this word if I were not writing to my sister. In truth, he is much better—a simple, strong, good man. Few demonstrations of politeness: a cordial handclasp to my general,

a word to me and a quick glance, a second long, which read me to the bottom. He is instantly concentrated on the matter about which my general came to speak to him, an affair of the service about which I cannot tell you. I am behind, and they are both leaning over maps. Neither the map, which is not new, nor the haphazard furniture of the office in which we are in indicates a need of luxury or of comfort. The man himself is of middle height. He has the broad shoulders which I perceived in the shadow of the staircase at Furnes, a powerful head, illuminated by ideality in the upper part, strong in the lower, as though there were in him two men. A rough mustache covers his lips; the jaw is thick, projecting, heavy, and one feels that in another man it would have drawn the whole face to itself and modified it; but the mind was on the watch, it fought, it won, it has spread its reasoning power over the brow, which is broad and bare, in those long and deep eyes, solidly inclosed, near the temples, by the arch of the eyebrows, which falls in a rapid incline, and which moves without haste between the wrinkled eyelids. I am sure that these eyes, which have read many books, now read nothing but maps; I am sure that they have wept; they are full of meditation. This Foch is certainly a man of meditative habit. He speaks as though he were explaining a difficult subject to children, without raising his voice, without ever trying for an effect, by little groups of words which are separated by marked intervals. One can divine, by scarcely perceptible inflections in his speech, the great sentiments and movements of this passionate soul, but they are not expressed. A little good-natured laugh effaces, or tries to efface, the impression made by one word spoken louder than another. What I most admired in Foch's words was that he never wasted any, that he never entered into any useless explanation; the most rigorous will in the simplest language, that is hardly a characteristic of our south, and yet Foch belongs to it; but he comes from the mountains and we belong to the plains, Marie. When he had given his advice and his orders he replied to my general,

who congratulated him on having won the great battle of the Yser, and asked him:

"How did you do it?"

I think I can reproduce, almost without alteration, the words of this modest victor:

"Bah! one does what he can! In great circumstances we often decide for reasons which seem to us very small. One does not always know what one ought to do; one feels it. In war one must act, above all one must not be afraid, not to make too many calculations, to choose quickly, and to trust to one's choice. A decision must be made in a hurry, and it is always so. Everything around me is alike, in this office or another, this furniture, this map, this cigar which I am chewing; yet I must! I must! So many things are possible, and I must! The great thing is not to weaken, not to tremble when the decision is made. One holds, when one wishes to hold, with almost nothing. This wall which I built, at the beginning was a thread, and it stopped the rising tide."

These words, this countenance, what he has already done, all indicate more than a good general—a great captain. You know that there is in this word a spaciousness which the other does not possess.

My general goes about the country in an automobile; I accompany him.

I saw in the plain of St.-Pierrebrouck, on a road bordered by its ditches full of water, and at that hour of the evening when one would say that the air is strewn with chopped straw, the rays are so broken in it—I saw a majestic girl who looked like you. Do not be angry if I say majestic. She walked well—are you satisfied?—her face had a deceptive calmness—like yours; she was carrying on her shoulders a very well-made yoke from the ends of which hung two buckets of shining copper. This girl was coming back from the fountain. She was one of your friends, a worker, certainly a virtuous girl. In the distance were poplars with their heads cut off, and almost everywhere willows which

had lost their leaves, for the reason that they show them sooner than the oaks. My vision disappeared quickly.

You ask me if I have changed much. Here it is; I have become a man of war. The time in which I am living has been joined again to my years at St.-Cyr and my years in garrison. I have always been a soldier. I have lived only to live the hours of the present. Swear to me that you will only marry a man who has fought, and fought gallantly. Such a man alone will be worthy of you, Princess of the flowering *garigue*, who will first have helped France, your mother and mine. The rest—

Marie, tell me something about L'Abadié and those who live there!

Early in the morning, after she had made her bed and put everything in order, Marie sat down at her table and wrote:

You want news? What you write is the only thing which is worth anything, and you are mistaken when you say "at home." We have no home since you have all gone. No fireside is full, no soul any longer inhabits its château, its apartment, or its farm. All the life is where you are, and we pass our days in seeking you through longing, through memory, through prayer. The rest may be duty; it occupies the hands, the mind a little, but not all the heart. Oh no! nobody is happy as of old; even if you come back on leave or wounded—only a little—we should not find again the joy of our old L'Abadié; because of this wind of war which blows everywhere; because of those who pass us, each one of whom is a living grief; because of the date of your coming departure, which we should all of us be thinking about, every minute. There is no home any more, Hubert!

Your son is asleep, in the little room next to this. He is growing, getting taller, and when I see him playing—not often—with the little boys of some of our friends, will you

believe me? it seems to me that he has already the figure of a cavalryman. He has your thin calves, his shoulders are thrown back like yours, and he has that eye which suddenly becomes watchful when a noise, a movement, or only the action of his imagination, awakes it, and makes it questioning and distrustful. We saw an airplane passing over our olives. Where did it come from? Where was it going? "It is on a holiday," said Maurice. And was it not a good answer? What other explanation was there? This darting thing in the Provençal sky, these wings, this drone like a bourdon—the child dreamed of the flying-machine, and every day, without saying anything about it, looks for this sovereign apparition which once passed through the air in which he lives.

I can see you smiling! You ask yourself whether, I too, have not seen some unexpected love passing in my sky. No, I assure you that I possess the whole of my future love, that which I have saved up to give away some day. I do not think of marrying during the war. I should be too much afraid. And then, too, I feel a certain distaste when I hear that a nurse is engaged to a wounded man. Might some one not suppose that she came there, into these poor hospital wards, to win somebody's love? I cannot analyze very well a sentiment which I am not anxious to feel, but it seems to me that something would be lacking to the pride of my love if I could say to myself that I had conquered a man weakened by suffering; that I had come to him with an air of pity; that my care, my steps, my rounds, my semi-religious costume, had none of them been for pure charity, but that I was seeking my own interest in nursing a soldier. I wish, after the war, if I am loved by a man who has fought, to conquer him myself, too. However, it is not to my credit that I think in this way. Most frequently the sufferers whom I tend have no name. Unknown, I help some Frenchman; that is all. The confidences which I receive do not concern me. That is all my merit; it is small. We have a great deal of work, for nothing is ever finished when one

attempts charitable work, which is a great art. I often think that painters and musicians must know the same torment. The women who work by the day and who help us are more easily satisfied.

Do you recollect Clarens, who bought a little piece of the water-power of the Durance? He is on the way to become a millionaire. His workmen detest him, as he was detested before them by every one from whom he made a living. He pays dear, and he loves nobody; his wife continues to go to the market every Saturday in a light waist and with bare head. She always bows to papa, which is, in my judgment, a sign of intelligence. Her husband, when he meets us, never fails to take a letter out of his pocket and to read it, with his eyebrows divided by the deep wrinkle of a genius in business. My dear father is pained by these rudenesses, which are often, where we are concerned, signs of ingratitude. He said to me last evening:

"Marie, there was a time when the village was the continuation of our family, and they knew it and showed it. My father often told me so. But the good fashion of the old people, who loved, is no longer so wide-spread. I do not want partizans, but relatives. And I often charge myself with not having known how to make them. I think that Hubert will know how better; the school of war will have taught him about men."

You see, we count on you, not only for being happy, but that a little bit of France may be happy with us and through you.

You ask what sort of weather we have. Sun, Hubert, hot sun. Because you are tramping in the mud of the north do you want Provence to forget that she is the guardian of the joy of life, and that dust is her fog? Only one sign reminds me every morning that winter is slipping through the world; it is the coldness of the water which I have just poured into the basin. The air is warm so long as the day fights. The vineyard of the *garigue*, which runs up toward the olive-trees, the vineyard where your son was laid, by his mother's express orders and yours, four days after he was

born, between two royal vinestocks, that he might be brought in contact with the august earth, has put on its autumnal splendor. It has not diminished in the least its ordinary state. It has not softened the brilliancy of its gold, of its purple, of its vine branches of the color of wine dregs edged with green. The women gathered the grapes till the end of September. The odor of the must ran in ribbons round the presses, the tubs, the hogsheads in rows, and traveled through space. To-day the last forgotten berries, the stragglers of the vast company of grapes, are drying up on the half-bare stems, and the thrushes are noisy on the ends of the boughs of the peach-trees. Hunter, when are you coming?

I kiss you, dear Hubert, and am hurrying to the hospital.

YOUR MARIE.

November came, December came. Hubert continued to live the active life of a staff officer attached to a young, bold, and enterprising general. He volunteered for every difficult errand, and few regular liaison officers carried more orders than he, or reconnoitered more ground, between the month of October, 1914, and the beginning of 1915. The climate of the north had but little effect on this southerner, dry, sober, and accustomed from childhood to long walks. Only ennui possessed him, and it irritated him not to be able to see things clearly. From the neighboring sea, from the soil which had drunk up so much rain and the water of so many rivers, canals, and ditches, the fogs arose. They started on their travels. The wind collected them and drove them in clouds, as big as a large country, toward Germany or France. Water fell morning, noon, and night;

if sometimes toward noon the drops of rain were not so thick, if the layer of clouds thinned and allowed a yellow light to filter through, which cast no shadow anywhere, soon the sheet of wet darkness closed its rent and continued to flow on in the sky, like the German armies, which also were thick and always advancing. The drops, serried, of equal size, began again to fall upon the fields, where the turnips, the cabbages, the roots of the wheat which had been cut, the dead stems of the beans, trembled in the saturated earth. Under this deluge men fought, worked, and drilled, dug trenches and shelters, ate, slept, sometimes found the strength to joke; a slight smoke arose around their bodies, as from the skin of a dog which has taken a bath. The new planks, brought from a distance and hastily knocked together to provide huts, grew moldy in a fortnight. From the shore of Flanders to the frontiers of Switzerland the soil, excavated in numberless parallels which were joined together by other twisted lines, held invisible armies, facing each other, between which extended the zone of balls and of grape, the zone of death, twice bounded by nets of barbed wire. Foreigner or Frenchman, no one could think of France without at once seeing in his mind the line of battle which cut it in two and the river of ever-fresh blood which ran from the sea to the Alps.

VIII

A NIGHT ON WATCH AND THE DAY AFTER

AFTER getting his training as a private soldier, Pierre Ehrsam left Besançon and was sent to the front. A rapid passage through a cantonment, an inspection by the captain, then, at nightfall—that is to say, very early in the afternoon—formation by fours on the village square, and the order to go to the front. Two months spent at Besançon had only added to Pierre's original grievances against his new country. He did not regret having left Alsace and taken service in France, because the justice of the Allies' cause appeared to him in such a strong light that he could not comprehend why it was not clear to everybody. But life in common, in the dormitory, in the courtyards, many things heard in cafés, phrases read in the socialist newspapers, the sort of suspicion which they showed him, the term of probation which they exacted, before sewing the woolen chevrons on the sleeves of the former non-commissioned officer of the German army, strengthened his first judgments and added to

his irritation. No doubt he might have got himself recommended by the leading men of Masevaux Valley, and more than once the idea had come to him of writing to them:

"Tell them who I am, who we are, and that we deserve something better than this reserved, almost hostile, and very ill-advised reception."

But he put it aside from pride. "I will make my own way, alone."

In fact, he was very much alone. His mother's letters, regular, once a week—she wrote the next day to Joseph—gave him the state of affairs at the factory, news of Masevaux, and generally told some story to the credit of the French, whether soldiers or officials.

Pierre quite understood his mother's meaning, and on this point never replied. Toward the end of his stay at Besançon he learned that a chasseur of another battalion desired to exchange with one of the Fifth. Pierre presented himself to the captain, who was a fine soldier.

"Why do you wish to leave the battalion?"

"If I go anywhere else, coming from the Fifth, I shall get a good reception."

"Did you not get one here?"

"No, I came as a German. I have had quarrels, fights, and I feel very bitter."

"Then I will approve your application to the chief. We must have no bitterness in our service, except against the Boches. I know that you have the military spirit."

"Not that of the barracks, not that of the rear."

"So much the better. Do you think that I have it?"

The officer looked for a moment at this poor chasseur, who had no vulgar fear, no trickiness, in his look.

"You can go, Pierre Lancier. Your request will not be refused. I am sorry for you."

Pierre turned away, having seen a man, and saying to himself, "If I were going under fire with that one, I would have withdrawn my request."

So he belonged to another battalion when he went up to the first-line cantonment. It was at the beginning of that war between soldiers underground, when the hollow roads were nothing but ditches without wattling, cutting through the valleys and climbing the hill. Men were badly sheltered. They slept where they could, often in a hole dug in the talus of clay, of chalk, or of gravel, and the watchmen raised their heads over the parapet to watch the enemy—that is, the ground over which they might advance, and the earth thrown up, fifty meters, off, a hundred at most, which marked the line of the German trenches.

The autumn was severe. In the part of the country where Pierre was going to pass the coldest months the men complained of not being warmly enough dressed, of needing woolen undershirts, socks, and drawers, and the commandant, who

was a man of social position in Paris, had written to a number of his friends there:

"Beg woolen things for my chasseurs."

On the evening of the 18th of November it cleared up, the rain ceased to fall in the sector which he commanded, and a dry wind began to blow from the east, bringing an odor of pine-trees. At the same moment the chief received from a cyclist a note written on glazed paper, bearing the somewhat conspicuous arms of a family which passed its autumns in a château fifteen kilometers behind the lines. He at once gave orders to a half-company cantoned in the village, and while he was telephoning, his officers, who were separated from him only by an open door, were surprised to hear him speaking of the trumpets of the battalion.

On a wooded plateau, surrounded on three sides by ravines, and joined to the west by tilled fields, a few guests were assembled around a woman who was still not without freshness, but who believed more in her own youth than did those whom she was receiving. Her hair, of a bright blond, framed a half-bred, somewhat puffy face, whose uniform tint was not wholly due to nature.

"Well, gentlemen," said Madame du Revoir, "it is all arranged, isn't it? I repeat; Monsieur de la Halleraie and Monsieur de Céry have been good enough to check off the parcels, which are in order in the vestibule. Halleraie, you have charge of the distribution of the drawers?"

"Precisely."

"You, Céry, have the mufflers, the sweaters, the socks?"

"We will be ready, too," said Madame de Céry and Madame de la Halleraie together.

Mademoiselle du Revoir, a girl of fifteen, nodded in sign of assent.

"Oh, I have no doubts about you! Since you are near the window, open it, so that we may see what sort of weather it will be," added the hostess.

The forest-ranger, who had recently been appointed "inspector of young trees," and who happened to be there on a visit, turned the latch and opened the shutter. In the rectangle of the wall the nocturnal landscape appeared, the beautiful descending waves of forest trees from which the leaves had not yet fallen; above, the sky resplendent and dark. It was the time of the new moon. The smallest stars glittered. The cold air, laden with the odor of leaves, the most powerful and lasting of the perfumes of the year, came into the room, made the circuit of it, and revived M. de Céry, an old man, who was beginning to feel sleepy.

"You see, gentlemen, that we shall have fine weather, but we shall have to get up early."

The rumbling of the cannon came in through the window with the wind. Madame du Revoir and her guests ordinarily no longer paid any attention to it; they tried to continue their life

as it had been before the war; they spoke of the *communiqué* only at the hour when the mail arrived. Nevertheless, these men of society, this hostess, who poorly understood the sudden harshness of life, and who made no effort to adapt themselves to it, but, on the contrary, struggled against it and imagined themselves brave in this, felt that evening a secret emotion. The picture passed through their minds of soldiers surprised in the trenches by the bursting of shells.

"Close the window, will you please? It is a little cold."

Before daybreak, the chasseurs, with staff or whip in hand, driving mules, came up the winding paths which surround the plateau of Revoir. They were laughing. The leaves fell floating down in the motionless air. Some had fastened sprigs of holly with its berries in their caps.

"We must be handsome; the lady is beautiful, it seems."

They were handsome, because of youth and freedom from care. Others, by another road, were also coming up. The rendezvous was for fifty-five minutes past six, on the square, graveled esplanade, surrounded by a line of hundred-year-old orange-trees which separated the forest from a Renaissance château with walls of rough stones, high in color, violet and red, with narrow windows, a long roof made cheerful by weathercocks and by chimneys, once light in color, now moss-grown, like the ivy-covered trunks of trees. The door

was closed, the windows also. But in the twilight, beneath the shutter of the first story, rays of bright light mingled with the new day. As seven o'clock struck, a flourish of trumpets broke out in the neighboring wood. The musicians could not be seen, only the drivers holding the six mules with red rosettes—where did they get these scarlet knots—from the cloth of an infantryman's trousers?—and in front, a very young sub-lieutenant, who saluted with his sword. For the door of the château was opening. The mistress of the château placed herself on the topmost step of the flight, between her daughter and Madame de Céry. They had put on morning gowns, summer gowns which an unfastened cloak allowed to be seen. M. de Céry and M. de la Halleraie, according to their promise, moved, and, imagining that they were working, brought a first package, covered with wrapping-cloth. M. de Céry called out:

"Blankets? Where is the mule for the blankets, gentlemen?"

He could not go on. The young officer had taken this hand, which had scarcely finished its gesture.

"Thank you, sir, thanks for the battalion. Will you kindly present me to Madame du Revoir? Sub-Lieutenant Balmin."

The officer, so soon as his name had been pronounced, kissed Madame du Revoir's hand, bowed to Madame de Céry and the daughter of

the mistress of the house, and, while M. de Céry and M. de la Halleraie were removing the second package, asked:

"You will permit me, madame, to have these gentlemen relieved? We have to be at the cantonment at twenty minutes past eight."

At the same time he made a sign to some of the chasseurs, who came on a run, went up the steps, took each of them a package of the woolen goods, and in three minutes had the whole loaded and fastened on the backs of the mules.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-two, madame."

"Saint-Cyrien?"

"Promotion from Montmirail."

"Will you have a cup of chocolate or some champagne?"

"Champagne, madame."

"Your men shall be served at the same time you are. Come quickly! Ah! The dear French army! My friends and I never stop thinking of you. My grandfather, who was a Parisian, as I am, was a colonel in the army."

The guests entered the dining-room, while two footmen, one very old and one very young, and three maids who laughed and blushed at so rare an opportunity to "see people," carried out on the terrace before the château tables already set, and, filling the glasses of the drivers and the musicians, showed also the strong taste which they had for the army. When Madame du

Revoir appeared again all the chasseurs spontaneously saluted her. And it was a pretty way of thanking her, silent and cordial.

Ten minutes later the chasseurs were on their way down through the forest toward the cantonment. The trumpeters went ahead, then came a group of men preceding the pack-train.

"Chic, wasn't it, the reception which we had up there?" asked Sub-Lieutenant Balmin.

The chasseur to whom he spoke, a new-comer whom the officer was not sorry to question and to feel out, was Pierre Lancier.

"I served my time in a rougher army, Lieutenant."

"More stupid, too. Did you see how the chasseurs thanked her by saluting? What eyes! What gestures! What a feeling for delicate courtesy! One would have said that it was an assemblage of gallants at the levee of a beautiful woman. You may say what you like about the lady, but what she did, and the way she did it, is purely French."

"I should have understood it at the opera, but we are at war, I think."

The young officer looked in astonishment at the handsome soldier who was walking down the path beside him. He was ruffled at first, but quickly realized that he must explain.

"You will learn about that. The war obliges us to make every sacrifice except that of courtesy to women. We surely owed an aubade to this

lady who has given us several thousand francs' worth of woolen clothes. She is taking the place of the government."

"She is usurping it."

"Fortunately. You will soon see your comrades in battle."

Pierre said, in a low voice, as he nibbled a pine needle: "I am a little ashamed of what I have just done. It is not war."

"Oh yes! A war of gentlemen."

"How many gentlemen are there in the battalion?"

"They are all gentlemen, and so are you. Bonaparte had a fine army, but not like this, not like this, believe me."

It was only twenty-five minutes past eight when the detachment arrived near the cantonment at the bottom of the hill, three hundred meters from the village. When they reached the top the commandant watched his men file by, watched the unloading of the mules, congratulated the chasseurs gaily, and then, taking his sub-lieutenant to one side, said to him, without raising his voice:

"Balmin, you will be under arrest for twenty-four hours. The reason is that you flirted with the donor ten minutes too long."

The officer passed near the Alsatian and said, in an undertone, "You see, in our army, too, discipline has its place."

Two days later Pierre Ehrsam, at the end of a

salient in the French line, standing on the firing-step, wearing his tam-o'-shanter, which formed a visor and protected his eyes from the light of the crescent moon, with his gun lying on the parapet, his head rising above the earth thrown from the trench, was listening and looking into the night. A cold mist, thin, but which gradually formed drops of water on the face and hands of the soldier and on the barrel of his Lebel, thinned the light and narrowed the horizon. Behind its waves, driven by a scarcely perceptible east wind, a man might have come within fifteen paces without being seen. The sound of words, of strokes of pickaxes, reached him now and then without its being possible to guess where they came from. Pierre felt happy at being in this dangerous post, watching over the safety of every one. He started. Some one, whom he had not heard coming, was speaking behind him:

"Is it you, Lancier?"

"Yes," said he, turning his head. And he saluted a shadow leaning motionless against the wall of the trench to the right.

"Commandant Lux, a Lorrainer. It is the first time you have come out against the Boches?"

Ehrsam, the taller of the two, studied his chief, young, muscular, in the full flower of his strength, mental and physical. He stood the look of those pale-blue eyes—yes, blue, even in the darkness of the rainy night—this look which sought the looks of others, started them to running like

game, and drove them to earth. The commandant, satisfied with the meeting and with this first examination of the recruit, said to himself at the same time:

"Not afraid, this chap; capable of attachment; not tamed yet."

Pierre replied: "I could not come sooner, Commandant. When the day was set for mobilization I was to have gone to Mulheim; I went to Besançon instead. There was no delay on my part."

"French blood, I see."

"Alsatian, which is nearly the same thing."

A few rifle-shots were fired in the dark, to the right; a volley answered them. The silence resumed its former majesty. The cannon rumbled, but very far off, at a distance where it is no longer a noise which interrupts thought and drives away a dream which one had begun.

"Are you happy at having recovered your country?"

The reply came slowly. It was honest and bold, from a soldier to his chief.

"Not altogether."

"I like that better. When we were at peace we were not ourselves these last years, and you could not judge your brothers in arms. My dear boy, you must call upon Our Lady of Mirth, Our Lady of Good Humor. You will get accustomed to us. You must see us in the war in order to understand everything, not in civil life. You

will soon see. Do not hurry to love us—I mean, to love France. That will come. I hope that I shall soon be able to make you a corporal, then a sergeant. You were a non-commissioned officer in the German army, weren't you?"

"Yes, Commandant."

"Then, if we have some lively times, who knows? Perhaps the gold stripe. Do you doubt it?"

"Oh no."

"There is little promotion by selection in the chasseurs, but death takes care of the promotion by seniority. It has been rapid for some months. Well, good luck to you. I will go on with my rounds. Have you anything to ask me?"

"Yes, Commandant."

"What is it?"

"Do you know whether there are many Alsace-Lorrainers opposite us?"

The officer, who had begun to look over the embankment at the slow-moving fog, looked at Pierre again, and, the latter thought, suspiciously.

"The Germans have been careful not to form Alsace-Lorraine regiments. I believe, indeed, that they send your compatriots to the Russian front. Still, there must still be some men from your neighborhood in the ranks. You have friends, naturally?"

"Very close."

"Forget them; we are your friends now. Good night, Lancier."

In three steps he had disappeared in the trench. It was entirely dark. As often happens, the fog was tossing about and slowly moving along! It would become transparent in corridors, when one could see, opposite the trench, or to the right or to the left, an avenue of muddy grass, upturned earth, a tree, a bush. Then everything would disappear, and the wind would remove the flat, hollow column. Files of men arrived from the rear, and told who they were as they passed the sentinel—detail with soup, detail with coal, detail with poles and wattles. The commandant wanted the men at the front to be comfortable for the winter season. The details went away, but the silence did not return. Hammer-strokes, the sound of steps and of heavy things being moved, also traveled in the listening fog, which repeats secrets far off. Work was going to fill the coming hours. The opposing armies came out of their holes and strengthened their defenses. A little starlight began to fall from heaven. The watcher, with his chin resting on the clay parapet, thought he saw a convex form, of the same color as the grass, thirty meters or so beyond the barbed wire. It did not move. Was it a hillock? An old furrow? The body of a friend or an enemy, to whom nobody could give burial? A broken gun-carriage, without wheels? Tools abandoned by a patrol when it had been surprised? Pierre pointed the barrel of his rifle at this thing which he did not remember to have seen at this place

when he went on duty at sunset. He aimed, less with the intention of firing than from idleness to occupy his eyes and his hands, and to be able to say to himself:

"Whatever it is over there I hold at my mercy." This obscure form was his target. If his finger pressed the trigger the ball would go straight to this swelling in the pasture and would go through it, whether it was of earth, of wood or of flesh. And, as he leaned forward again, after studying the very short horizon, Pierre perceived that the object had moved; the fog was beginning to lift.

Certainly, the gun had not moved. It was the thing which had advanced. Very little, about a meter. There was a soldier lying on the grass, crawling, thirty meters from Pierre. To be more certain, the watcher waited half a minute longer. Then, no longer being able to doubt that he had before him a man patrolling, a German, he brought the barrel of his rifle from left to right, making it pivot on the earth of the parapet, and took aim. His right hand sought for the trigger. Then he had a thrill of horror. In his mind, perhaps even in the misty air of the night—who knows?—he saw a good blond face, calm, smoking a curved pipe as Joseph used to do as he went through the workshops in the mill, and saying:

"You wish to kill me, my brother?"

He wiped his eyes with the cloth of his sleeve. He was trembling. He never took his eyes from the man, who, thinking himself hidden by the grass

or trusting to his luck, was crawling more rapidly and approaching the barbed wire.

"I ought to fire; I have in my hands the safety of all those who are sleeping here. I must! If he surprises a sentinel—he is not alone; others are crawling in the grass behind him, no doubt—I should be guilty of murder; I should have betrayed my new country. I belong to France now."

That word decided the enemy's death. His finger pressed the trigger. A flash shot from the barrel, all the men posted along the line on both sides, to far away in the darkness, stood up at the sound. On the field of grass a gray phantom had risen. It uttered a terrible cry, shook its arms in the air, and fell without having made a step.

Pierre could not resist; he stepped over the parapet. It was a mad action. Twenty shots had already replied to his own. Bullets were twisting into the earth about him. He might have crawled, but no! he was on his feet, looking for the opening in the barbed wire. A comrade, bending down in the trench, called out:

"Well, what of it? You have killed a Boche. We never pick them up!"

The advanced protectors of the two armies, waked from the torpor of their watch and fearing an attack, were firing volleys all along the lines. They came from the right and left of Pierre's post. He, half insane with horror, paid no attention to them; having found the opening, he zigzagged through the wire system and advanced at a run,

being shot at by the Germans hidden in the trenches opposite, who opened fire on the human form in movement. Pierre reached his victim, knelt down, took the head in his two hands, and turned it toward him. Bending down, wholly absorbed by the fear of what he imagined, he saw a temple with a hole in it from which the blood was pouring in great bubbles, eyes turned up, a pointed beard, but not blond—red, rather, the color of decayed beech leaves. At that instant the light of a rocket was bright above him. Oh, how he looked at that poor dead face, and with what growing certainty of not knowing it! And he was beginning to rise, having suddenly recovered the use of his reason and the consciousness of danger, when a violent but not very painful blow knocked him over and he laid down a couple of paces from the German. He tried to rise, felt that he could not move one of his legs, dragged himself by his hands, helped himself by his good leg, went in this way fifty meters, suddenly grew weak, and fainted.

He waked up long afterward in a room in an inn which served as an ambulance, several kilometers behind the front. He had been shot through his right leg a little above the knee, and the bone was touched. Pierre had lost a great deal of blood. A rapid dressing was made by a surgeon for whom five other wounded men were waiting. Then, when he had been taken to the nearest railway station—it was on two great

lines—in a truck which bounded with every inequality of the roads, Pierre was taken out of it by two nurses who laid him upon the straw of a cattle-truck, in company with eleven other wounded men. One of the nurses made up the thirteen travelers. And the train started. It went on for days. No one ever knew why the soldiers which it carried suffered so long an addition of torture, except the surgeon, and he has since died. The straw, which was not clean, was mixed with a dust contaminated by the excrements of animals, stuck to the lips of the wounds ill-bandaged or uncovered by the shaking of the journey, and poured into them powerful poisons. Some of the wounded played cards; others, in the depths of woe, engaged in the toilsome and discouraging composition of the romance of the wound, from the moment when it was received to its extreme and innumerable possible consequences, were silent; others swore and cried out, beating with their fists the wooden walls splashed with blood:

"We can't stand it any longer. Take us out!" They called out during the stops, especially, in spite of the nurse. Officials would come to see what was the matter. They would call a Red Cross lady, who would give a bowl of bouillon or a glass of wine, and, if there was time, readjust the linen bandages. For the rest they said, simply:

"We have no orders. All the same, it is a pity to make these young men travel so far."

"And have we much farther to go?"

"I don't know."

"Couldn't you ask?"

"Useless."

The engine would start again, the dark rooms for animals, loosely hitched on, would resist, yield, bang against the buffers of the car ahead, and would continue to roll through country districts which they did not see. The cold air came down in eddies through the openings protected by iron bars, which had been varnished with saliva by the outstretched muzzles of oxen and cows.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, November 24th, the door of the car opened once more on its steel wheels. Some of the wounded were taken out. There remained only five of the original dozen. The others had been given hospitality here and there in the towns along the immense line from Paris to Marseilles. As the sky became clear and the air warmer the nurse would leave the door half open. The journey was almost ended; they could see, by the narrow opening, a country of plains with horizon of mountains. An hour more and the door opened wide. Nurses with stretchers came up to the car. Curious bystanders looked on. Pierre had not heard the name of the station. He asked:

"Where are we?"

The name, curiously pronounced by mouths which sing everything, conveyed nothing to him.

Two automobiles were waiting in the courtyard

of a little country station, at the foot of a bare mountain. They had to go half across the plain. Pierre and his companions were taken in this way to a hospital, and there, each in turn, saluted by an old gentleman with very light eyes, with hair which fluffed up a little on his temples, who first bowed to the new arrivals, without saying anything, as though to ask leave to serve them, then took up the rear of the stretchers, the heaviest part, while a professional took the front end.

That morning at breakfast M. de Clairepée said to his daughter, "I carried a wounded Alsatian this morning."

"Ah, he is the first! Is he badly wounded?"

"I am afraid so. Find out about him, Marie; Baptiste and I carried him into Madame de la Move's ward."

It was a hard day for the volunteer nurse. Other wounded arrived during the afternoon; it was necessary to carry several of them from the ward directed by Madame de la Move to the operating-table, then to take them back, still asleep, bloody, like the bodies of men who had been assassinated. It was the work which was most disagreeable to M. de Clairepée. He could not watch this battle between life and death, where death seems so near triumphing, without suffering himself. At the end of the afternoon he was able, thanks to one of the carriages which was going for provisions, to go to the town of Graveson. A friend had invited him to dinner.

A NIGHT ON WATCH

It was nearly eleven o'clock when the stretcher-bearer, with his legs gray with dust above the knees, fastened the inside bolt of L'Abadié. He was about to go up to his room when he heard a noise in the drawing-room. He opened the door carefully and saw his daughter writing at his work-table, in the midst of the manuscripts and books of history which he had neglected for weeks. The light, confined between the slanting sides of the shade, shone upon the calm face and the blond hair, which seemed of fine gold. The thought of his captain's epaulets came into M. Clairepée's mind and caused him to smile.

"Well, Marie, not gone to bed yet?"

It is infinitely sweet, on returning after an absence which love has made to appear long, to meet a look which has not ceased to belong to us, and which goes straight to our eyes and says, "Here you are at last."

"I have transcribed the whole of this long passage in the 'Researches on the Provençal Nobility,' which you had commenced to copy. I really must help you; besides, this long war would be too hard to endure if every second were not occupied."

"It is captivating, is it not?"

"Very."

He went to her, put his arms about her, and kissed her.

"Less than you are; less than you."

Happy at being together, seated at the same

side of the table and facing each other, the father and daughter felt their souls open to some benediction, I know not what, which comes to us in the evening, after a well-filled day. The father, after his custom, gave an exact account of all that he had done; Marie related in the same way her afternoon and evening, but with less animation.

"By the way, your Alsatian is not doing well."

"I anticipated it. The operation was a long one."

"Yes, Madame de la Move does not know whether he will have two legs the day after to-morrow. It seems that he is very courageous. He must suffer terribly. They have put him in one of the three rooms on the south side."

"Yet he is not an officer?"

"No, only a private in the chasseurs, but he is very ill. I say only a private in the chasseurs; that is a great deal! From the bits of sentences which he spoke Madame de la Move saw clearly that he is a man of good education. He has, they say, a face of singular strength, well-arched eyebrows, a soft mustache; if it were not for that deathly pallor, which has not left him, one might say that he is a handsome man. He chose the name of Pierre Lancier when he enlisted in the army, but his name is really Ehrsam."

"Ehrsam? That means honest man, brave man; a fine name!"

M. de Clairepée, after placing the wrapper of a

newspaper between two pages, closed the book from which Marie had copied the quotation, and said as he rose:

"Marie, have you ever tried to count the bourgeois families which would be noble to-day if we had a king?"

A few days passed. Pierre had a violent fever; he was delirious; the news of his approaching death passed, like a secret, from mouth to mouth, through the personnel of the hospital. Then the suppuration diminished, the mottled color of his skin commenced to melt in patches, sleep came back to him, the young blood continued in the arteries and veins its victorious offensive against the fatal germs, and one morning in December the surgeon-in-chief, coming out of the room facing to the south in which Pierre Lancier lay, said in a low voice, both for his patient and himself, "He will live."

The wounded man did not appear to hear; still, he had received the promise in his heart. It was within him like a mighty joy of which he could not speak. It put him to sleep. The curtain which closed his cell, and which separated him from the passage by which came air and light, had been drawn back. Through the window opposite, on the other side of the corridor, the brilliant winter sun came in through the partition and warmed the wounded man's feet. Pierre slept till a late hour of the morning. At the moment when he awoke, a shadow passed in

the corridor. He raised himself and rested his head on the highest part of the pillow.

"Madame?"

She who came was Marie. She was going through the passage, having been called by a nurse in the neighboring room.

"What do you want, monsieur?"

He looked at her. She had stopped close to the partition on the left hand, and, half turned away, still in the position of walking, leaning a little forward, she was about to disappear as soon as he should have answered.

He looked at her and did not reply.

"Go to sleep," she said. "You are still too weak."

The hand which she had laid on the folded curtain slipped along the stuff. A slight movement of the whole body, which rises and gets ready to start, announced that Marie was about to continue on her way.

"No, do not go! Listen!"

She waited a little, accustomed to the whims of the sick. Her eyes were full of pity. He drank in first this tenderness, which touched his suffering. And his eyes, his dark eyes, filled with life. The will, absent for days, returned, already mistress, at least for the moment, in that look which had belonged to suffering and to dreams.

"Listen, I am going to live again!"

These words escaped from poor blue lips,

the eyes also said it, and the whole drawn face surrounded by the shadow of the hairs of a stiff beard. Marie heard, with beating heart, this cry of the new life, which took her to witness.

"Yes, you are going to live again! The chief has just told you so, has he not?"

"He did not believe that I should hear him so well. It might have done me harm. It is so sudden and so new! Why have you still so much pity in your eyes? The moment has passed. It was yesterday that I might have died."

He was half delirious. He went on, "I have some one at home waiting for me—"

"You are married?"

"My mother lives in the land for the sake of which this war has been unchained. What is your name, madame?"

"What does it matter to you?"

"So that I can remember better."

"The nurse on duty."

"So that I can call for you again."

"Marie de Clairepée."

"How beautiful!"

He passed his hand over his eyes, in order to keep them awake a little longer; then he said:

"Mademoiselle de Clairepée, will you be charitable enough to write to my mother that I am going to live? My name is Pierre Ehrsam."

And, worn out with fatigue, he turned aside his head with his eyes closed.

She went away. Having met Madame de la

Move, head of the nurses, in the large room close by, she gave the message of the man who was going to live again. Madame de la Move promised to write, but on second thoughts she telegraphed.

Three days passed, and one morning the corporal of the guard saw a lady in mourning coming, well dressed, who embarrassed him by asking:

"Monsieur, have you among the wounded a chasseur, Monsieur Ehrsam?"

"No, madame."

"But see, I was called by a telegram; he must surely be here. Inquire, I beg you."

"There is a chasseur, an Alsatian—"

"Then it is my son!"

"But that is not his name. I know Lancier; I don't know Ehrsam. Wait a moment—"

He went to inquire, and ten minutes later led the mother up to the wounded man. She was preceded by Madame de la Move and followed by a little porter whom she had met in the station. For Madame Ehrsam had come on foot.

"How is he, madame?"

"Not very well, but we shall pull him through. The fever has broken and he has slept. Is he your only son?"

"No, madame, no."

"You have another in our army? What regiment is he in? Perhaps we may have him some day amoung our wounded."

"No, madame, that one is very far away."

This was said in so short a tone, so devoid of the ordinary maternal intonation, that the head nurse, as she went up the stairs, cast a glance over her shoulder at this woman who had a secret and did not tell it. When they had reached the foot of the wounded man's bed Madame Ehrsam went forward alone between the partition and the bed, up to this pale young man who was tortured by suffering even in his sleep, as one could see by the deep furrow between his eyebrows. Once in a while Pierre would moan feebly. She who had so long been accustomed to come at the cry of her child passed her hand very softly over his aching forehead. The first time the crease grew fainter, the second it disappeared, the third Pierre awoke and saw his mother.

"Ah, mamma is here! Mamma! Mamma!"

"Yes, here I am! You sent for me—"

"No, it was not I!"

She thought there was a strange expression in those eyes which fever still filled with its dreams; she would have liked to put order, an order like that of her own mind, into the thoughts of her son, which escaped and fled away. Still, it would not do to give him a shock; he ought not to be told that he wandered. She asked, trying to recover the voice of long ago, when he was a little child:

"After all, perhaps it was not you who sent for me. Who, then, Pierre?"

"She, mamma, a very beautiful young girl

who was passing; very kind, who stopped— She refused to tell me her name—"

"It does not matter, I assure you, who carried the telegram. I received it. And what a journey I have had, I who have never traveled! Our friend of the Place du Chapitre lent me her carriage to get to Belfort, and how far Belfort is from Saint-Baudile! But I do not regret it, Pierre. I find you better than I expected, not quite well yet, but I have enough to make me happy."

She kissed her child and sat down beside him. Madame de la Move had withdrawn almost immediately. The mother and son talked for half an hour, then in the afternoon for a full hour. They had found Madame Ehrsam a room in the Hôtel de la Durance, an inn which did not look like much, but which was famous for its hearty welcome, where she passed, on that day and the next, all the time which she did not spend with her son. The second day she said to him:

"I can leave you; to-morrow I must go back to Alsace, my dear, but I shall still be busy for you and your brother. I have to defend the fortune of my two sons, fighting against each other, and to provide a living for a number of workmen in these hard times. My Pierre, I am proud that my oldest son was wounded on this side of the frontier. If my other son were hurt, or if he were killed, I should have no compensation for my grief. Tell me, when you are able to walk, what will they do with you?"

She leaned over him as she spoke with a face which was still young, and rosy on the cheek-bones, calm in appearance, but around her intelligent brown eyes, the look of which was never distracted nor divided, the lids had become brilliant. She was forbidding the tears to flow.

"Tell me, what will they do with you?"

He understood what she was suffering, having already recovered, not all his strength, but enough to make up his mind, and to smile as he answered:

"I think that when the wounded are cured they first have a leave before returning to the depot of their regiment."

"You will spend it at Masevaux. How good it will be to have a month together, even a fortnight!"

"Too good!"

"Why do you say that? What do you want me to understand? You men are like that; when you have decided on something which is going to break our hearts you have not the courage to confess it. We have to guess it."

Several memories were suddenly waked in her; they were present and living in her, those hours of the past when, from weakness, perhaps, with an awkward kindness, Louis Pierre Ehrsam had brought her by degrees to fear, to see, to arrive by herself at a decision which he had formed alone. And yet what a difference there was between the father, autocratic and secretive, and this weakened young man who, not to meet

his mother's eye, had laid his right cheek on the pillow and was replying:

"Mamma, mamma! When you ought to help me!"

She started; she leaned farther over him; she lowered her voice, so that the people in the neighboring compartment should not hear the secrets between mother and son.

"You do not mean to hurt me, I know. But why do you say that Alsace, our house, I myself, would be too much happiness?"

"Because it is not Alsace that I need to love, now."

As he said this he turned again toward his mother, and she saw the eyes which never lied.

"Don't you understand that I have difficulty in getting accustomed to the people of the country which I have chosen, and which is yours, too, mamma?"

"Yes."

"And if I go back there to you all, I shall have too many arguments against her? You will give them to me without meaning to—I have enough of them in my memory. That is the first reason why I speak as I do. You ought to have more pity on me."

She saw in the eyes of her son so much trouble, so acute a suffering, that she felt changed in a moment, and all her maternal compassion came back to her.

"No, I understand. Tell me all about it, my

dear child. You are afraid that coming back to us may retard your getting accustomed to the new country—old and new together?"

The lowered eyelids answered, "Yes."

"It is difficult? You have been irritated? You are fighting against yourself?"

The eyelids were lowered again.

"That is the reason you want to go back to your regiment when you leave the hospital?"

"That, in the first place; yes, as soon as I am nearly well."

"Alas! But you have another reason? You say, 'In the first place.' Am I mistaken? You have another motive for not coming back to me?"

Two tears ran down Madame Ehrsam's cheeks. She straightened up. The reply was slow in coming. Pierre answered at last:

"Mamma, I have, in fact, another reason—"

"What?"

"Joseph has never stopped fighting on the other side. I must do as much on mine. It is to balance—"

He had found the strength to laugh as he said this.

The mother wiped her eyes, looked for a minute at this son who spoke according to his blood, and said:

"It would be better."

But that morning she could not remain at the hospital till lunch-time.

The wounded and the nurses, who saw this

Alsatian woman passing among them so dignified and silent, talked about her and Pierre. From that word which she had spoken about Joseph, "He is very far from here," some of them had guessed that the second son must be fighting in the German army. They discussed "the case of Pierre Lancier," as they called it. Sympathy arose for the wounded man, and a legend grew about him without his ever knowing it.

Madame Ehrsam did not attempt the second day any more than the first to go about the town of St.-Baudile or to call upon the head nurse or the surgeon-in-chief. There was only one thing which she wanted—to see that Mademoiselle de Clairepée, of whom Pierre had spoken to her a second time. Like many mothers, she distrusted feminine artifices, and considered herself bound to watch over Pierre's too enthusiastic heart, to warn it, to restrain it. She did the last day, toward evening, what she had not done before, having a horror of being considered curious—she waited till the two nurses and one of the linen-women from the right-hand wing left the house. At six o'clock, in the bright light of the electric lights, Marie de Clairepée, Mademoiselle de Lerins, and one of their friends passed before her. All three bowed; for an instant the limpid and grave gray eyes met the brown eyes of Madame Ehrsam, who continued to look at the one who was walking away, taller than the others, and walking so well. And there came to her heart a great sweetness at having

simply seen her. "I am not afraid of that one," she thought.

Early next morning she kissed Pierre for the last time and took the train for distant Belfort.

The visit had made a sensation; the departure increased its importance. They knew so little about these Alsatians, mother and son. What secretive people, and how interesting it would have been to make friends with them! But they paid no attention to anybody!

"It is a tragic family, it seems to me," said M. de Clairepée, confidentially, and twisting his lips to the left, so as not to be heard on the right. He had just arrived, and had stopped the chief surgeon in the vestibule, where nurses and tradespeople were passing.

"I have frequently thought that this lad must be the hero of several unusual stories. Have you noticed that energetic air?"

"Yes."

"How can one imagine that it has not been put to the proof? It is altogether impossible. In the first place, I am convinced that he left Alsace at the beginning of the war. He must have been a courageous fellow. . . . I have traveled in Germany. They kept a strict watch. You ought to ask your patient his story when you are paying him a visit."

"Ask him yourself, my dear Monsieur de Clairepée. I have neither the time nor the habit."

He bowed politely and slipped away.

In the rest-room, furnished with two chairs, a table of white wood with a washbowl, and a mirror which cost a franc and a half, to which the nurses retired when they were too weary, Madame de la Move, imposing and out of breath, drawing down on her forehead the band which had been displaced by the somewhat rapid pace at which she had come up the stairs, was confiding her impressions to Mademoiselle de Lerins, little, black, still young, wrinkled, with burning eyes, a real little prune of the south, who was sitting with her knees raised, her heels caught in the bar of the chair, and her head turned toward the head nurse.

"Mademoiselle, I cannot understand how that man should not be an officer yet. His mother is very well bred, and he is, too. When I take him a bowl of bouillon in the morning he has a way of thanking me by inclining his head which moves me every time. He must have a good heart. And he certainly is not loquacious."

"He would become so here," said Mademoiselle de Lerins, showing all her white teeth and all her gums.

"I don't think so. At best, he would be eloquent. A wounded man who left the hospital yesterday told me that he had heard Monsieur Pierre Lancier, in a cantonment, among soldiers, expressing himself with singular heat on the subject of discipline and organization, which he considered only middling in France. The section of

chasseurs to which Monsieur Lancier then belonged was coming back from an unusual sort of expedition, it must be confessed. The mistress of a château in the neighborhood had distributed packages of woolen goods for the battalion in the court of her château. The band had given an aubade to the guests in token of thanks—"

"The fanfare, madame! A battalion of chasseurs!"

"Fanfare, if you like. But I think it was very nice. He did not think so. His uncomplimentary comparisons, while they made most of his companions laugh, for they are always glad to find fault, wounded others secretly. It was the best Frenchmen who suffered. I should have suffered, and I should not have laughed, and I will tell you why. Think of this Alsatian preaching to us!"

"Not often," replied Mademoiselle de Lerins. "Ordinarily I find him taciturn, as you do. I like it. It requires a certain amount of strength not to tell everything."

"Madame, they are asking for you in the ward —the man who was operated on yesterday."

The head nurse immediately left Mademoiselle de Lerins. Leaning over the bed of a badly wounded man, breathing, without giving the slightest sign of disgust, without raising or turning away her head, the odor of flesh eaten by gangrene, handling linen stained with pus and fresh blood, she helped the surgeon for a quarter of an hour to wash the wound, and rebandaged it. She never said an

unnecessary word or made a useless gesture. Then she went on her rounds. They admired her in the hospital with good reason; the wounded whom she tended were full of confidence. For herself, she simply felt herself useful, happy at not being what she was yesterday and what she would be to-morrow.

Two young girls were folding sheets in the linen-room above the vestibule. The one who was blond, a very sunny blond, and with a rosy color, as she passed her hands over a piece which she had just placed on top of a pile of exactly similar pieces, also said:

"I should like to see the Alsatian. When he gets up we shall see him out of the window, walking in the garden. They say that he has had romances."

"My dear, the best of them have had the same romance; they have loved France, which gave them but little love in return."

"Who invented that? Not you, Ludovise!"

"No, it was Marie de Clairepée."

"Oh, she? She is like a pomegranate flower; if there is only one in an orchard, one cannot help seeing it. Come, take your sheet. Good. Double it. Double it again. Now shake it. Pull the stuff a little more. Ludovise, you are getting lazy. The sheets will be badly folded."

Pierre did not suspect that he was the object of so much attention. His strength was coming back. Toward the middle of December he began

to walk in the corridors, first on crutches, then with sticks. On Christmas morning he went to mass in the chapel of a Brotherhood which was next to the hospital, and when he came back he sat for the first time in a narrow room for reading and games which the organizers of the hospital had named "the hall of the convalescents." He did not stay there long, and he was soon seen to come back to the rattan easy-chair which he had taken care to have put at the same place for several days. It was in the large corridor, half closed by a screen, and which connected the vestibule with the rooms on the ground floor. The wounded lay there, on reclining-chairs, smoking, reading, and writing letters. They went out but little. The head surgeon shortened their stay at the hospital as much as possible. Word came to him from Paris not to keep the men under treatment too long, and not to extend the convalescent leave. A battle had been raging in Champagne since the 21st, and unknown names suddenly took on an aureole and became the names of noble villages, inscribed in memory forever—Perthes, Mesnil-les-Hurlus, and others besides. The wounded had to get well promptly. They knew it, and they allowed themselves to live calmly and lazily. Dreams of love floated through their idle hours; the necessity of loving, the need of forgetting the spectacles of death and the sufferings which they had endured, and to leave behind them, here or there, a new love

which would make the life which they were risking more precious.

Pierre had chosen his place. He read a great deal, with his head resting on the half-reclining back of his rattan chair. Soldiers, doctors, nurses, passed along the wall, from one window to the other, from the darkness to the light. With a quick glance, without his thought being even interrupted, he would take in the moving silhouette and start again watching for her who almost never passed. It was necessary that Marie should be called to the room on the ground floor, where the administrative offices were, for her to be seen walking along the line of the corridors, erect, simple, neither seeking nor dreading people's looks, and, dazzling in the light of the windows, white in the half-light of the bits between, turn at the end of this passage, cluttered up with chairs, tables, and crutches stretching out, and enter the managers' office. When Marie had passed Pierre would drop the book and not open it again. He thought her beautiful, but, being prejudiced against young French girls by what he had read in German books, and often, indeed, in so-called "Parisian romances" which his Masevaux friends had lent him, he strove to detect in her signs of that coquetry, that skilful maneuvering, that spirit of cunning, perhaps even of perversity, which foreigners seem agreed to attribute to young Frenchwomen. He discovered, on the contrary, a being of singular strength and clear-

ness, whose virtue was not prudery, whose courage had the air of ignorance, but was not. She passed through these men in the hospital corridor with the evident determination to be, so far as possible, the incarnation of charity. She knew that she was beautiful; she must have known that she would attract admiration. But she could control her eyes.

On New-Year's Day Pierre saw her in this way, and wrote to Masevaux:

"I have been less alone than I feared. The year 1915 opened for me with a few words the indefinite meaning of which sufficed for twelve hours of reflection. We wounded in this little provincial hospital have more liberty, perhaps, than in others. This morning, when our nurses appeared in the wards, they saluted us prettily with the traditional greeting, 'Happy New-Year.' The one who surprised me in the corridor, for I had not seen her, as I was lying down on my reclining-chair, said to me: 'I do not like to mutilate good old sayings, monsieur. May you have a Happy New-Year, good health, and Paradise at the end of your days.' She must have a very bright mind. One can see that from the slight curve of her lips, which go up half a line and change the whole face. I could think of nothing to answer but, 'So be it, mademoiselle!' She had said the same thing to the man in the next chair. I was not especially favored; still, I lived all day long on those words which you used

to say when I was little, and went into your room on the day when we got our presents, and which were repeated to me this time by a young girl whom I did not know."

"Did not know" was put there to prevent the maternal imagination from roving. If Marie did not often take part in the short dialogues in which others gladly indulged, M. de Clairepée, who was not afraid of talking and wandered about the wards oftener than his daughter, showed an especial liking for this Alsatian, in whom he had quickly seen a man of character and of good education. He would make a sign with his hand as he passed, "Good morning, monsieur," or would ask after Pierre's health, but so far had never entered into a conversation with him.

On the 5th of January he plucked up courage and, holding out his hand to the Alsatian, said:

"I was delighted, monsieur, to see you fully convalescent. You went out yesterday with two canes, without crutches, it seems."

"Yes, I was able to go to the tobacco-shop, three hundred meters from the hospital: that is very fine for a man of twenty-seven."

Pierre was lying, as usual, on his rattan chair, behind the screen. M. de Clairepée took a camp-stool, took off his stretcher-bearer's straps, which he placed across his knees, and sat down.

"Would you believe that I had a discussion about you yesterday, Monsieur Pierre Lancier?"

"I would believe it, since you say so."

"The head surgeon, who is one of my friends, asserted that you had given him occasion to defend France against you."

Pierre shook his head, and smiled sadly:

"Not France, monsieur, but the manner in which it is educated, managed, governed. You are the miraculous example of a people which does everything to die and does not die. Yet I am far from saying all that I think. Since the chief allows me to talk freely with him, I might, next time, make a few observations on your health service, which is incomplete, badly supplied with instruments, improvised like the rest."

"You might say, ours!"

"I say yours when I do not approve."

"You know the fine shades of French."

"Good Heavens! do you suppose that we do not know French in Alsace? What extraordinary ignorance—if you will excuse the word—of our habits, our customs, our ideas, the geography of my native land! The French forget easily and almost perfectly!"

"Monsieur, that which lies at the bottom of each of us, and at the bottom of races, is not readily seen. Who would have said, before last August, that mobilization would be accomplished without trouble, and even without accidents, and that the French, who had been taught so little or so badly about the country, would find so much courage to defend it? When it comes to judging a people like the French it is a mistake

to take account only of the noise which it makes or the false ideas which they pour into it; one must be able to calculate the resurrections of which it is capable. I do not say that you are unjust; you do not mean to be, and your enlisting in the army proves it. But if we do not know you, neither do you know France."

"I have been living in it for five months."

"It has lasted more than a thousand years. I assure you that on certain days, when I analyze my ideas, my dislikes, my likes, I say to myself, 'Where does this or that come from?' Then I imagine I see the gray beard and the kind eyes of a Clairepée who allowed his body to be slashed in the service of France a hundred years ago, and who says, 'From me, grandson, from me.' Don't be in a hurry to make up your mind, monsieur. Fight some more. You can form your judgments later."

They sat there under the shelter of the screen, in the corridor of the hospital, studying each other, moved by a flood of thoughts of which they expressed only a few. If they felt that they were different from each other, they had reached the point where two men respect each other. Monsieur de Clairepée, who more than the other had the habit of courtesy and the desire never to wound any one, was the first to change his tone.

"I see," he said, "that the Alsatian has lost none of that spirit of opposition to authority which is mentioned all through his history."

Pierre said, with his voice trembling a little, "Happily, monsieur."

"I agree with you."

"Not only have we not lost it, but it has broken out against the German, especially since the battle of the Marne. You will lose nothing by it. Our masters have seen still better that we love you—"

"After your fashion."

"Which is the right one. They say, 'Nothing has been accomplished, but after the war we will Germanize Alsace and Lorraine once for all. This time we will succeed.'"

"I hope they may not have the opportunity."

"I fought and shall fight for that, monsieur. But you ought to understand that, having suffered because we have remained French, we have some reason for reproaching the French, who have not remained sufficiently themselves."

"What do you mean?"

The Alsatian was an enthusiast, but, like many of the sort, he could moderate his earnestness and be persuasive. In this was apparent one of the essential differences between his race and education and the race and education of his German masters. Pierre lifted himself up and leaned forward toward M. de Clairepée, and his eyes remained burning, but his voice became more seductive and skilfully modulated.

"I came—pray understand this—from a country where everything is foreseen, and you foresee

nothing. You live from hand to mouth. Your last fifty years are not connected with any great French idea. You have avoided trials, you have avoided going to the bottom of things, you have avoided questions in Parliament. But it may be doubted whether you have made history in France."

"You forget our colonial conquests."

"A pearl necklace."

"Oh, but it really amounts to something!"

"But it is destined for the thieves. What have you done against them? And these divisions, these scandals, these thefts, inside the country?"

"I admit that our politics are often a poor business. But you see that the people have remained capable of a better one, and worthy of it."

"Yes and no. You are beginning to decay."

"And kindly tell me how you knew it in Alsace?"

"Do you think that we do not read your books in Alsace? Well, your intellect grew so subtle that it lost its solidity. We felt clearly that your energy was decreasing; you weighed, you discussed, you placed all ideas side by side, good and bad, having scarcely ever the very simple courage to choose, and that seemed sufficient to you. For us, during that time, separated from you, having lost touch with you, seeing this skepticism, this absence of boldness, this love of an easy life which are signs of decadence, we began to weep over you and to detach ourselves. Two causes which, thank God! did not have time to produce

their full consequences, tended to separate us from our true country, this excess of refinement and the excess of your credulity. I am still angry when I think of it. Ah, how much more was my little Alsace worth than you! She alone did not believe in *Kultur!* She alone resisted this devil's poison. And it was peasants, manufacturers, merchants, workmen, who fought against everything which was Boche, while your professors, your men of learning, your statesmen, swung censers before the philosophers and statesmen of Germany!"

"The war has already cured us."

"I rather doubt it, monsieur. It is we who bring you the remedy. Alsace will gain by becoming French again, but France will gain remarkably in recovering Alsace—not only soldiers, taxpayers, a magnificent soil, forests, lakes, and thousands of millions worth of potash, of iron ore, of coal, which our land contains; the great value of Alsace for you is, in the first place, in the energy which we have retained."

"Bravo! I like that word!"

"Perhaps because you do not hear it often enough. You need our obstinacy, and you will have it; our spirit of command, and you will have that; and then you will have the Rhine, and you will feel at last that great air current, from north to south, which you have not breathed for too long. Other nations fight for possessions, in the first place, for commerce; you also greatly

need to renew your industries and to expand throughout the world, but the first-fruit of your victory will be this: you needed a solid element, obstinate, tenacious, to complete the national character which is your true wealth and your true glory, and it is we who will bring it to you. A necessary virtue will be restored to you."

The old gentleman looked now with profound sympathy at the man who, in exposing the faults which he had to find with France, showed himself so truly French. He began to laugh, and, placing his hand on Pierre's left hand, which was lying on the edge of the rattan chair, said:

"I should like to have a long talk with you, monsieur; we must see each other again. To-morrow is Epiphany, and we are accustomed to make a festival of it in our Provençal families. Give me the pleasure of dining at L'Abadié. I have not had a carriage for a long time, and François Bouisset's horses are sick, but I have a tenant in the neighborhood who will sometimes use his horses for me in the evening, and I will have him take you back to the hospital."

Pierre accepted.

IX

TWELFTH-NIGHT

THE next day it was cold; the sky, hung with gray clouds without a rift, diminished the beauty of that land of Provence. Marie left the hospital earlier than usual, the cook did not put out the fire which she had lighted in the morning, and the whole of L'Abadié breathed an odor of aromatic herbs and browned butter when a chasseur, wearing a tam-o'-shanter and leaning on two canes, appeared behind the grille which they had closed, perhaps to have the pleasure of opening it, and showing that one did not enter into the house as into a railway station. This was the only little deception of this welcome, which was simple and cordial. Marine came to the grille, shrugging her shoulders, for never in her life had she made an unnecessary trip like this one.

"Here's a pretty affectation for a simple poilu," she grumbled.

Having looked at him between the bars before turning the handle, she added to herself:

"Handsome fellow, upon my word!"

Then aloud, in her finest southern accent:

"You must be Monsieur Pierre Lancier?"

"As you are Marine, it seems to me."

She beamed; she saw that they had been talking about her and she at once added this guest to those for whom she had worked without complaining.

Monsieur de Clairepée came to meet the Alsatian, rubbing his hands.

"Ah, monsieur, what a severe cold!"

"You think so? Our springs in Alsace are full of such days; if we had to complain for so little, a good third of our years would be made up of groaning."

"Come in quickly. You are not tired?"

Pierre was, on the contrary, quite weary, and very pale when he came into the room before the drawing-room.

There, behind the door, Maurice, with his hair curled, Maurice, wrought up by the preparations for Twelfth-night, was awaiting the guest with extreme excitement. As soon as he heard him coming he opened the door of what he called his house because his enthusiastic little soul had dwelt in it, day and night, for more than a week. And as though he had been charged with doing the honors of his imaginary domain, the child, erect, with head thrown back and brilliant eyes, bowed to the tall soldier and said:

"Good evening! Won't you come, monsieur, and see my kings?"

Then taking the right hand, which held the handle of the cane, leading him very carefully, he led Pierre to the corner of the room, by the window, where, thanks to Marine and Grandpapa de Clairepée, carpenter in ordinary to L'Abadié, the manger had been erected and decorated with its Child Jesus, its Virgin, the three kings and their suites. The principal personages were there according to the Bible, the star, too, and the straw; those of less importance were according to tradition, their garments were from the hands of Dido, the joy of the pilgrims and their accoutrements came from the depths of time, their grace and a number of their names came from Provence. For beneath the roof of smooth sticks, which showed the sky through it, if the Magi came, the shepherds, which were the first to be called, still remained, and insisted on remaining, with their sheep and their shepherdesses dressed like the girls of Arles, with velvet headdresses. Twenty lighted candles formed the footlights before this splendor, which was separated from the world in which we live by branches of juniper, buckthorn, holm oak, and olive, cut in the Petit Crau, and bathing everything in their perfume.

Maurice had not taken his eyes off of the face of Pierre Ehrsam; he looked at him with that insistence, that passion, to know to which something answers, we do not know how, and which asks: "Are you a friend of children? Do you understand them? Do you love them? Ought

I to love you?" He perceived on Pierre's face the expression of an amused curiosity and a tender faith. There was no doubt; the big soldier from Alsace, this handsome man with the brown mustache, whose collar was decorated with a hunting-horn, liked the procession of Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, like a little boy of L'Abadié Farm. And the heart of the child opened, and was filled with admiration and affection for the man who still sees all that a child sees.

"Look, monsieur, at this black king. Grandpapa painted him yesterday. I said Our Father and Hail Mary before the manger to-night. See the beautiful Madeleine, who looks like my aunt."

"Be still, Maurice!"

But the child went on, caressing the hand of the man who was his friend now:

"Have you the kings where you come from?"

He was delighted to hear this reply:

"Yes, my boy, we have the Feast of the Kings in Alsace, too. Here, this is what I used to sing that day when I was very little."

Pierre, leaning forward, hummed an Alsatian carol:

"Und überm stall wo's kindlein war—"

He stopped.

"It is true, Maurice, you can't understand it. I will sing it in French.

"And above the stable, where the new-born child lay,
The star stopped in its flight, O marvel!

On their knees, prostrate, they offered
Gold, incense, and myrrh.
We offer you also our possessions, our bodies, and our souls; Lord, receive the gift; grant that nothing may be lacking in it."

"How pretty it is! Thank you, monsieur! Now, Aunt Marie, sing our carol."

M. de Clairepée was on the right, and Marie on the left. She smiled at the waxen child, then at the other, and sang two verses:

"De gendarmo
Sout lis armo
N'i'a cinq o sieis regimen,
An un fort bèl équipage
D'estafié, lacai o page
Abiha superbamen.

"Dins la villo
Mai de millo
An mai de pou que da mau,
An quasi tòui près l'alarmo
En sounjant que li gendarmo
Loujaran dins sis oustau."[1]

[1] Of gendarmes
Under arms
There are five or six regiments;
They have a fine suite
Armed footmen, lackeys, and pages
Superbly dressed.

In the town
More than a thousand
Were more frightened than hurt,
They were almost all frightened
When they thought that the gendarmes
Would lodge in their houses.

But she did not translate. Maurice clapped his hands.

"It is true! They must have been frightened in Bethlehem! Five or six regiments to lodge, and all black, perhaps!"

"Come, Maurice, you have talked enough. Go to bed. Everybody spoils you, even the wounded, who sing for you."

When the child had kissed his grandfather and Marie, as was his custom, he wanted to kiss Pierre. And these first minutes under the roof of L'Abadié created more intimacy between the Alsatian and his hosts than would an hour of conversation.

"What you see in my house," said M. de Clairepée, "you will see in that of my friend, Meste François Bouisset, bailiff of the farm; in all the houses of the country and the village, perhaps, even—I don't know—in the house of that Maximin Fustier, a tenant of mine, dealer in oil at Graveson, who is going to drive you back to the hospital this evening."

When Pierre was seated in the drawing-room, before the fireplace in which a scanty fire was burning, two branches of mulberry and a stick of holm oak, Marie asked:

"I saw that you had received the best of answers to the errand—do you recollect?—which you asked me to do for you. The head nurse telegraphed and your mother came."

"It was her second trip into France. The first

was her wedding journey. I hardly hoped that she would come. I was surprised that the happiness came so quickly. In Alsace we are accustomed to wait a long while for our happiness."

She looked at him a little surprised and said, as she sat down, "We are receiving you in a very old house, which has no other value than that of not having changed masters for more than two hundred years."

"It is true," said M. de Clairepée. "We can say of ourselves, or rather they say of us, that we belong to the old nobility, which often means also that the family is as poor as it is old. With us there have been no marriages with rich heiresses, and we have inherited little. And yet I missed one inheritance of which I felt sure."

As he liked to tell stories, and in repeating them easily remembered certain amusing expressions which he had used before, he held out his hands to the fire, and then, pointing to a pastel to the right of the fireplace, said:

"See, there he is, my uncle Vertin, the little broken-down man with the pointed face. It was said that he was very rich. My father expected to inherit his property, but died before him. I confess I had the same idea in the moments of financial stringency with which I have not been unacquainted. Monsieur de Vertin unfortunately had too much imagination. Owning a large property in the Crau, he undertook to get rid of all the stones in order to plant something or other

there, and he ruined himself at it. The Rhone pebbles won the battle; the good man lived a considerable time afterward. His health was of that deplorable kind which never changes, which makes every one feel kindly and free from jealousy, and gives hope to prospective heirs. But it is a vain hope, my dear sir; they last. My uncle died at eighty-three and left me nothing. I have continued to cultivate faith and France in the hearts which have been intrusted to me, after them my fields, my olive groves, my vineyards; these, let me tell you, are of a very worthy sort. This evening you shall drink some of the wine which they give me."

He rose, and went and brought from a low piece of furniture with glass doors within which strong red bands, others of a deep purple, and the golden glitter of titles and lines indicated a treasure of old books, a thick volume bound in calf, opened it at a page which he did not have to look for very long, and as he sat down and put the book on his knees he wore the expression of a connoisseur. Then he read a page from the memoirs of a canon of the thirteenth century, who ended his description of the region between Eyragues and Château-Renard in this way:

"Its best wines are those of Le Castelet, L'Arête, the Agriotes, and, above all, that of the Garigue vineyard, a wine of a particular liveliness, esteemed from the time of Philip Augustus, as is attested by Philippe le Breton, the poet of that prince.

May not the excellence of that wine have contributed to the health and the gaiety of the inhabitants?"

"I am convinced of it," said Pierre. "Alsace also drinks the wine of its vineyards."

"How did you leave it?"

"I will tell you."

Marie said nothing. She looked and listened, sometimes to her father, sometimes to this soldier who had come to Provence from so far away, and, in her thoughtful and secret mind, she was forming an opinion. Pierre began to relate his escape and his first months in the service of France. M. de Clairepée, who had warned Marie, was waiting to take again the defense of the country against the criticisms of the Alsatian, who would not fail to make them. He was prepared on this subject better than any other. But no, Pierre gently explained his project, which had been decided on long before, the obstinate, painful, daily struggle, obscure and almost hopeless, against the stranger, a heretic in everything. Then, suddenly, abandoning the rough and guarded tone, leaving the enemy, he told amusing speeches of the people with square heads, he told of qualities which clearly showed the extraordinary passion of this man for his Alsace. In speaking of Alsace he became lyric, and Marie was astonished that a manufacturer of a valley in the Vosges should have abundant, burning, and accurate words to express his thought. She remarked:

"I am not in the least surprised, as some of my compatriots might be," she smiled as she said this, "that you speak such good French. But correctness is not everything, and I am surprised."

"At what, mademoiselle?"

"At something which surpasses it in what you say. Where did you get this habit of delicate shades of meaning?"

"From our mothers, mademoiselle. If you ever come to Masevaux you will be amazed to find in this large mountain town women who have not the brilliancy nor perhaps the accent of the women of the Rhone, but whose minds have something quick, southern, and antique."

"How you love Alsace!"

"I have hardly thought of anything but her, mademoiselle, like many who were born there, because she has always been threatened. We have lived in a state of warfare from childhood, and we had to know what we were fighting for. What I have told you of my country, so quickly and so badly, we were obliged to tell the Germans at the outset. There is not in Alsace a man of the old stock, manufacturer, forester, mayor of a village, farmer owning his farm, who would not appear to you full of delicate shades and, consequently, very French."

"Bravo!"

She said nothing more, and the dialogue was taken up again by M. de Clairepée.

Praising Alsace, as always, Pierre no longer

judged his recovered country severely. He sometimes looked at Marie, whom the conversation interested, and who let it be seen. He admired the fact that she knew how to be silent, being pretty and clever. She appeared to him in a new setting, no longer in the costume of a nurse, but at home, dressed in a tailor-made gown of dark cloth, quite simple. The light of the fire, of the last rays of daylight coming in through the window, united in bringing out that slender and pearly neck, this face which was modeled by scarcely perceptible play of emotions, pity, approval, gaiety, fear, attention, without the features moving; this hair in free waves, which the veil no longer confined. He would have liked to retain and fix in his memory the picture of this proud, listening little head, where thoughts must be stirring which no word revealed. He said to himself: "Wisdom ought to listen like this. How is she judging us, her father and me?"

Marine came to announce that dinner was served. It was long. Dido was quick. She had put on her grand costume, a blue-velvet ribbon at the point of her chignon, her white cape, her silk apron. But Marine carved or served slowly in her kitchen. The three at the table appeared not to notice it. The conversation had become cordial. They troubled themselves little with general ideas; Marie, skilfully, would bring back Pierre Ehrsam to things in Alsace, and, as happens when one makes a man talk of his

childhood, of what he knows and what he loves, Pierre enjoyed telling of the life at Masevaux. M. de Clairepée and Marie answered by quoting some trait of Provence. The bill of fare had been chosen by a hunter who was an epicure. Larks caught in the net followed ring-doves sent by chance, the day before, by the owner of a pigeon-loft in the Pyrénées. M. de Clairepée made his guest taste different wines of his growth, and ended this review by a glass of the "Clos de la Garigue of 1893."

"Drink this with respect," said he. "It is the last royal gift made me by a vine which is now three-quarters dead and whose canes I am burning."

At the same time Dido presented at arm's-length the soft, sweet tart like that which every housekeeper in Provence had made that night in honor of the Three Kings, who came after the Shepherds.

After dinner, Marie, M. de Clairepée, and Pierre came back into the drawing-room and sat down before the fire. They formed a semicircle; M. de Clairepée was on the right, and Marie in the middle. As happens when a liking is mutual, Pierre and Marie questioned each other on their tastes, without dwelling on it, without having a clear consciousness of what they were doing, but by a natural inclination, being neighbors. They did not try to deceive each other, they talked as if they had known each other for a considerable

time, they had become serious; occasionally their youth rose to their lips and changed the quality of their voices. The gaiety of the dinner had gone. Something of a dreamy character had come. It was a moving sort of conversation. The father, in his turn, was silent. As it began to get near the hour when Pierre must return to town, Marie asked:

"Why are you becoming gloomy? I am not gloomy! See?"

He did not answer. Marie's face lighted up with a youthful joy. Pierre looked at her for a moment and then said:

"You have the Catholic smile."

She burst out laughing.

"What do you mean? Is there a Catholic smile?"

"Certainly! You cannot understand it as we do, who have Catholic and Protestant villages. I have some excellent Protestant friends, but they do not smile as you did—the soul which opens, a pure light which comes and goes peacefully, like the day."

Then he added, in a lower tone, "I shall not forget it." And they said nothing more to each other till the clock struck nine. M. de Clairepée, who had been made a little sleepy by the dinner, rose and said:

"I am sure that Maximin Fustier is already at the door. The good fellow is never late."

He opened the window which gave on the court,

and in fact saw through the grille the farmer's little cart, the horse's back and the light of the lantern, which cut the darkness of the night with its luminous cone. Pierre made the trip back from the drawing-room to the house door on the arm of his host. He went very slowly, troubled by the thought that this evening was about to end, feeling clearly that to-morrow and always he would regret having said so little, not having allowed the emotion which he had at the bottom of his soul to be divined. The clouds above had opened; the moon, half full, lighted the house, the sand, the trees. He stopped at the entrance to the court.

"Ah," said he, "I am losing my head; I forgot my two canes."

M. de Clairepée was about to sign to Marie to go and get them, but she had taken them as she passed, and she held them out. It was nothing; it was only the contact of an anxious thought and one already on the watch. M. de Clairepée went forward toward the carriage. Then Pierre, standing alone with Marie on the door-step, said:

"I am probably saying good-by to you, mademoiselle. I have an idea that I shall not stay long at the hospital."

Instead of answering, she questioned him, and for the second time, in the eyes which did not turn away, he saw the depth of the soul.

"Monsieur, before you go, I have a question to ask you. My father told me that you were

severe in your criticisms of France in talking to him. Other people, also, have told me that you criticized my country severely, which is now your own. I do not know what you said; it is probable that there was some truth in it; we are an admirable country, but one over which one can also weep."

"That is prettily said."

"No, it is not pretty; it is only true. I am not trying to say clever things. If we had time, if we were not at the beginning of an absence which may be for always"—she blushed a little at having used these words, "at the beginning of an absence," for that signified that this 6th of January would be a date for her—"I should have asked you to tell me what you think on so great a subject."

"Ah, how sorry I am," he said, trying to laugh and not succeeding, "not to have heard the defense which you would have made!"

"I am not learned. I would have given you my woman's ideas, which would not have been so strong as yours nor considered from all sides. I can't do that. I can only say, 'Love it well,' and I ask you why you never touched this evening on this subject, which is so near your heart? I tried to lead you to it."

He looked at her again and answered, "I did not dare."

"Why?"

"Because you are—"

"I am?"

"So French! France itself!"

They walked to the grille without saying anything more. M. de Clairepée had shaken hands with the dealer in oil, a man of middle age, whose tanned face, full and smooth-shaven, had a singular expression of false politeness and irony.

"When you said that you wished to speak to me, Maximin, I supposed that it was, as you say, on the subject of your rent. Well, my friend, I understand; you are behindhand and want more time to pay?"

The man who was sitting on the wooden seat, with his back to the moon, leaned over the wheel and making a gesture with his right hand, which had dropped the reins, as if beginning a speech, said:

"Not exactly, monsieur. I belong to the older classes, and am going to be called. You need not expect to receive anything from my wife, my daughter, or my son-in-law, who had to stay at home because his chest is weak."

"But there are three of them left, Maximin, enough to carry on your business. They are well known, and one or another of them can go to see the people you deal with. I am willing to remit some of the rent, but the whole is impossible! If everybody who owes me does not pay me anything, what will be left for me?"

The tenant's oratorical hand made another gesture. It pointed in the dark to the invisible

country, the sleeping Crau, the road, the fields, and the vines on the plain.

"Well, monsieur, immensity is left for you."

It was said with a musical voice, with an appearance of sincerity, which would have deceived anybody but a landowner of the country.

"And then—" he went on.

At this moment Pierre and Marie came up. Pierre, helped by M. de Clairepée, got into the *carriole*. Good-by was said. The little horse, of many races, like his master, set off at a gallop, the lash of the whip winding round the thickest part of his belly, and the carriage, with those it carried, was lost at the turning of the road. Nothing was to be seen but the pencil of light from the lantern as it ran along the tops of the bushes, and that only for a few seconds, in the direction of St.-Baudile.

"Marie," said M. de Clairepée, "now Maximin Fustier will not pay me anything! They will send us to the poorhouse! Happily, François Bouisset and some of the others, those who belong to the old Provence, have retained the habit of paying what they owe. They are not like those who seek in the laws the right to be dishonorable."

Marie appeared entirely insensible to the lament. She closed the doors, put out the fire in the drawing-room, to help Marine, who would be up later than usual that evening, and went to her room. She felt, with entire certainty and a great dis-

quietude, that these hours of the Festival of the Three Kings had put an end to her peace of mind, to this mastership of herself which she had guarded so closely. Henceforth, something new was in her, not a love, no doubt, but a picture, a memory which she would not easily drive away. This young man was only an unknown, one passing by; to-morrow he would have left Provence forever. Why did the words which he had said come back to her with such insistence, and softness, and like the refrain of a song?

"You are France!"

Ah, how these words had gone to her heart, which would not have been so moved by any other compliment! There, on the sand of the court, between the house and the grille, she had heard the affirmation which must be called a declaration of love, although nobody but this son of Alsace would have thought of it.

She reproached herself for having provoked these words whose echo lasted and troubled her. How had she been imprudent enough to question Pierre Ehrsam? Why this impatience to know, as though the character, the tastes, the history of this young man really had great importance for her? He had only replied, eagerly, it is true, and she had enjoyed those confidences, this fleeting intimacy. What weakness! And now, what a disturbed mind!

She opened the door of the dressing-room where Maurice slept. The sleeping child, sovereign

peace beautifying his face, which was already of a handsome shape, made her envy him.

"No," she said, "I love nobody but you, my child, you and your father. You may be sure of me. It is true that I do not understand why I have so much trouble this evening in recovering possession of myself; but that is all. Nothing is changed."

Having looked at him thus, longer than usual, she thought that she perceived that Maurice was breathing with difficulty. She waited. She listened. At times the calm and pure breath stopped; a sudden pain, which did not awaken the child, caused him to sit partly up and to stretch out his neck; then his head would fall back on the pillow, so heavy with sleep, so completely relaxed in the hollow of the white linen, that Marie was soon reassured.

Those who had begun to love each other, in the secrecy of their hearts, were not to see each other again except for a moment. The surgeon-in-chief of the hospital, who had been informed that a number of wounded were on their way, coming from the neighborhood of Crouy, where our troops had made an unsuccessful attack, went into all the wards on the 12th of January, early in the morning, and when he came to Pierre Lancier, who was dressing in the room on the south side, said to him:

"You, my brave fellow, are all right again.

You were able to go, on foot, to the Château de L'Abadié on the Feast of the Three Kings. Don't deny it. I am delighted for your sake at the friends whom you have made here—but when one can take a walk like that, almost without limping, he ought not to occupy a place which is reserved for others who are more ill than himself. You can finish getting well at home. A leave of a month, eh? Will that suit you?"

"Permit me to refuse, monsieur."

"What, refuse?"

"Oh yes. I did not enlist to rest. Since you think that I am well again, I should prefer to go back to my battalion."

The chief surgeon looked for a minute at this man who refused to allow himself to be placed in a safe place, and replied, without showing the least feeling:

"Very good. You will go the day after to-morrow."

Two days later Pierre was standing, with a group of convalescents or men already cured, in the vestibule of the hospital. He was wondering whether he would go in this way, without a word from those who had received him at L'Abadié, for Marie and M. de Clairepée had not appeared for a week, and it was reported that the young girl was ill. They were to start at two o'clock. The corporal nurse had left the office of the hospital and was walking in the court. Monsieur and Mademoiselle de Clairepée

suddenly passed before him, getting out of the automobile of a physician which had brought them to the door of the hospital. Marie did not appear to have been ill; with her coloring heightened by the trip, she looked more rosy than usual. As soon as she had come up the steps of the vestibule she looked quickly for some one among the soldiers. Pierre, leaning against a column, understood that she was looking for him, and stepped forward.

"We wanted to say au revoir to you, monsieur, but my nephew was taken with a severe fever the very night of the Kings; we were afraid we should lose him."

"He is better?"

"Saved. It was an attack of croup. I have hardly dared to breathe. He is still weak, but my father and I wanted to wish you good luck."

"Yes, good luck for the Alsatian who fights for us," said M. de Clairepée, leaving some other soldiers to whom he had come to say good-by. "Be sure that we shall preserve a pleasant memory of your visit to L'Abadié, monsieur. And you?"

Pierre was about to reply. His look met Marie's. She, too, was questioning him, but it was not curiosity with her or society politeness. It seemed to Pierre that she was awaiting a reply more serious than the question. Not one of the features of this fine womanly face betrayed emotion; it was all under the command of a proud

spirit; but the look, direct, earnest, incapable of deception, asked:

"If you have no recollection of the evening of the Kings at L'Abadié but the poor one of a soldier on leave and of a traveler who will never come back, say so; you will go and join the others who have passed by and been forgotten."

Pierre replied, less calm than she in appearance, but their two hearts beat with the same emotion, because of the words which were about to come, and which would have in themselves something eternal.

"I am going to return to a loneliness which will be much worse than before."

Instantly she smiled, with that divine smile which he loved. She held out her hand.

Had M. de Clairepée understood all the meaning of these words and this play of expression? Often the most acute men, occupied with other thoughts, have seen nothing of a love which did not conceal itself. The whole room was full of noise and movement. He asked, putting his hand on Pierre's shoulder:

"Young man, the other evening we were to have discussed some of your prejudices against France. Do you recollect?"

"Yes, monsieur, and we talked of quite other things."

"I don't know how that happened! But when you are back from the front, up there, after the fights. If you have any time free—"

"I shall."

"Write to me and tell me the news about yourself. I shall be charmed to know that from experience your opinions have become modified. Ten lines only, if you like. Is it agreed?"

Pierre bowed.

"Come, children, load your musette-bags, and start for the station."

The corporal's voice rang through the vestibule and the corridors. The men who were to go came forward out of the groups formed all about the vestibule. Some had to run to catch up with the platoon of cured men. Cries rose, were swallowed up under the arch of the door, and followed them:

"Au revoir, lads! Good luck! Take care of yourselves!"

Then it all became quiet. When those who were leaving got into the automobiles to go to the station, some caps were raised, and one tam-o'-shanter. There remained between the four columns, or along the walls of the vestibules, only soldiers dressed in pajamas, dressing-gowns, old tunics, and old red trousers, who took their various ways to the wards where the hours are long.

Marie went up to the first story. She passed through the corridor which runs around the left wing. When she was before the window of the room which Pierre had occupied she looked at the familiar landscape, the roofs on the hillside, the

green gap where the irrigation canal passed, and followed with her look the road across the plain, which was recognizable in places. Never, certainly, had she felt such interest in the road to Graveson. She saw, very far off, a cloud of dust. Then, like those who have a new secret which they do not yet know how to bear, she went away with her hands clasped over her breast, her eyes half closed, and her face shining and enraptured.

"Oh, my beauty!" said Madame de la Move, "what has happened to you? You are like spring!"

"Perhaps it is because we have had a good letter from Hubert," said Marie, innocently.

And she tenderly embraced the head nurse, whose arms welcomed her.

She was telling the truth. That very morning Hubert had written:

I waited under the shells, for three days and nights, for the order to attack. Nothing has happened to me. If it had not been for this accursed hollow of the Aisne the cavalry would have had its part to play. It will come later. Do you know the rumor which is going round, Marie? In the spring—that is, very soon—the high chiefs will permit leaves. Can you imagine that? Leave to return to L'Abadié? No, can you see the rejoicing? To see papa, Marie, Maurice, and Marine, and the things which have waited for me? Don't repeat this. One must beware of joys when they first spring up; they often turn out weeds.

X

PIERRE'S LETTERS

IT was only a month later that Pierre's first letter reached St.-Baudile. It was dated February 17th, and the envelope bore as address: "Baron de Clairepée, at the farm of L'Abadié, St.-Baudile, in Provence."

There was nothing, either, in the text which recalled the recent past. Not a word of memory, not a formula of salutation. Pierre did not go beyond what he had promised; his letter contained only one of those stories which the gentleman nurse had asked for.

For a week I have been in the front line; for seven days I have been a corporal. Yesterday there was a general attack in Champagne and an advance. The battalion has been in action; what remains of it can easily be counted. We have not stopped fighting for a minute, even at night. Last night we were in the fields, under the rain through which passed flashes of lightning, and it was by the light of shells and rockets that we looked for the little gray shadows which ran away or which came back to us. At daybreak I could see that we were in a devilishly risky position. We had thrown ourselves into a German trench, which we had followed to

the entrance of a large underground shelter; one man had gone down the stairway, with his rifle in his hand, feeling the darkness; I was the second. I scratched a match on the cloth of my hood. I thought, as I did it, that the first shot would be for me; I shall see all my life the face of that comrade who had not been willing to let me pass him, as he turned. "It smells devilishly of Boches, but there are none of them here any longer." Then they ran from right and left, chasseurs and a few infantry, who came behind us, for a frightful barrage was falling on the trench and dropping those who tried the shelter of the hollow way. Soon, in this hole with wattled walls, there were at least thirty of us; crowded, standing, lying, pell-mell. I had discovered two ends of wire at the far end of the den, and I had stuck on them two candles which comrades had in their pockets. My head touched the roof; with my back to the woodwork, between my candles, whose grease ran down on my shoulders, I saw them all, in the faint light which struggled feebly against the darkness, against the fog from the breathing of the men and that from the earth. They had come from every side, fighting-men whom the hell of the fire had separated from the world of the living; some wounded, some half-asphyxiated, most of them exhausted.

Two officers of my company had been killed at the beginning of the attack. A single officer was with us in the shelter, a sub-lieutenant of infantry, scarcely out of his teens, slender, well turned out, a true, handsome noble of France, who was sitting down and was looking fixedly before him, a youth with a thin face spotted with red patches, with a heart-shaped mouth like his ancestresses of the time of Louis XIV, such as one sees in family portraits. He stared at the entrance of the shelter by which the Boches might arrive at any minute. Our cavern must have resembled the prisons of the Terror. He was waiting for his name to be called. He had his revolver in his hand. The noise of the explosions, scarcely deadened by the thick layer of earth which covered us, did not wake the comrades who were already asleep.

The wounded moaned, but their moaning was weak, and drowned in the noise of the explosions which followed one another almost without intermission. So far as we could tell, we had gone too far ahead, we were in advance of the rest of the line, and if the enemy succeeded in stopping the advance of our comrades to the right and the left, he would jump into the trench, and he, too, would enter the cavern. Outside there was only one man on watch, a giant from Flanders, Onslebecke, who had called out, when we had scarcely got in, "If there is need for men I will come for you." He had not come. Half past seven, eight o'clock, half past eight; the rolling of the fire did not stop. At this moment the sub-lieutenant stood up suddenly, turned toward me without knowing why, no doubt because of the lights which shone upon me, and cried: "I cannot stand it any longer! I am going to see!" He did not appear again. Several of the men began to eat pieces of bread and to drink out of their canteens. My eyes had ended by becoming so accustomed to the darkness that I could count my companions. I saw the little gleam of their eyes when they looked toward me and that of their teeth when they opened their mouths. They were almost all men from the country. The bursting of a shell, larger than the others and better aimed, caused the beam to crack and dust to fall from between the disjointed wattles.

All those who could raised themselves; several made with their elbows the gesture of protecting their heads; then their arms dropped, their shoulders fell back again against the wall. A root of a tree, long, slender, twisted, a sort of serpent, hung from the roof now, before me, lighted by the flame of my two candles, which were beginning to burn out. An insistent, obsessing thought filled my mind, "We are those whom one sees everywhere, in the dangerous parts of the battle, always the same from the beginning: the common people from the country, plow-hands, two or three clerks, with a nobleman who was here, and I who am from Alsace, head of a factory, and proscribed by Germany. Others will call us unlucky. Oh, how untrue it is! In the misery of this

war it is we who are France intact; I recognize her, such as they told me that she was; she is not a coward. I recognize and I love the man who does not understand very well, but who goes ahead all the same. The man who will have fought through the whole war, who will have suffered everything, the incomparably brave man, he is among us. These are the sons of France, sifted and judged worthy to defend my new country. You are good, and because of your sufferings you are beautiful!" I must have been thinking aloud; I was quite dazed. One of the men on my right shook my elbow and said, "You are dreaming!" At that moment the Fleming, Onslebecke, rushed down the stairs; his legs, his arms, his body, filled almost the whole space which was our way out.

"The Boches!"

The thought of my brother flashed through my mind. Yet I must go! Every one rose who was able, and went up into the trench. It was broad daylight outside. The barrage had gone forward in the direction from which the French might come; we began to fire as well as we could, all along the line, at the enemies who were coming down on us through a field of new wheat. Only two reached us, and we made these prisoners. I don't know how the French got through the fire, but they came up and saved us. We are back in a rest camp. The trench remained in our hands.

PIERRE LANCIER.

"The man is brave," said M. de Clairepée.

"He does not waste words. There is nothing for you."

"Nor for you, either."

"Oh," replied Marie, laughing, "I shall have my share if it goes on."

"Look at the conceited thing!"

"Not conceited; I simply think that a young

man, even though he were an Alsatian, cannot write more than two or three letters to an older man to prove to him the merits of Alsace. If you receive a fourth some day, it will be written with the hope of convincing a woman who is never far from you when the mail comes."

"Where did you read all this, Marie?"

"Those who have never read anything know it; it is the heart of our mother Eve which each of us has in her."

"Yet I do not suppose—"

She put on her fine, indifferent manner to reply.

"You would be wrong to suppose anything, my dear papa. We were with you— Besides, I do not care for hospital love-affairs."

A few days later M. de Clairepée wrote. The letter was polite, amiable, commonplace.

March 20th, second letter from Pierre:

Nothing much. The reorganized regiment has held the trenches again and has come back. I am billeted with fifteen men in a poor farm in the Champagne. There is little resemblance to Alsace; only the outlines. For wherever I go I look for something like my own country, and I find it. The earth is always kin to the earth. What creatures we are, always led by love! So the landscape is that of Champagne. I have just made the acquaintance of a sergeant who has recently come, a fine man, strong and well built, who was in the wood trade in the center of France before the war. I was astonished at his good sense and his calm reasoning on all subjects. Our German masters have so often repeated to us that the French were frivolous! When

he saw that I was interested in the account of his work in the forests, his journeys, his cartage and his sales, he told me about his family.

"We have always worked in the open air," said he. "The oldest grandfather of whom they tell at home had directed, perhaps under the orders of Lenôtre, perhaps without advice—we do not know—the creation of a great park and garden in Ile-de-France. It seems that it was so beautiful that Louis XIV was invited to see it. He came to the château, and with his cane and his hat with ribbons he went down from terrace to terrace, till he came to the grove of clipped trees with which the garden ended. He knew as much about it as he did about war. When he had admired everything he said to the master of the château:

"'I want to see your gardener.'

"'Sire, excuse him; he does not dare to come.'

"'Why?'

"'Because his face is pock-marked, and he thinks that he is too ugly to be seen by the King.'

"'Let him come. No matter how ugly he is, I declare that he is magnificent!'

"My grandfather saw the King, and from that time he was known everywhere under the name of 'Chatenay the Magnificent.'"

This touch would not be characteristic of Aisace, where we are less regal than you.

April 20, 1915, third letter from Pierre:

Weariness of rain, mud, gray skies, *communiqués* of the same color, cold wind, rest period in houses pierced by shells, where one sleeps on the ground between two companions, in the smell of sweat and vomit. My tunic is a garment made of earth, and weighs twenty-five kilos. My comrades carry as much. How do they hold out? They have not been taught what the fatherland is, so it is not from an intelligent love of it; neither is it from discipline, they

have so little of it, and neither is it from hatred of an enemy whom they have not been made to know. I am the only one who possesses the useful knowledge of the German animal. What I say is not believed. It does not matter that I am only a corporal of the third company of chasseurs, it does not matter that I suffer with them; they imagine that I have some interest in saying what I say, because I belong to another class. I am a gentleman. They have seen it, no doubt, from the manner in which I speak. They are worked upon to the bottom by the sophism of equality, in unconscious revolt against nature, which does not spare them disappointments. As if the poison of jealousy which they brought here with them were not enough, they read frightful newspapers which have no other subject to talk about. These sheets, which destroy the confidence of the soldier in himself and in his chiefs, are allowed to come into the army. Therefore, with the help of suffering, and the long time which they have endured it, I can see the discontent rising; there are beginnings of anarchy. How shall I secure obedience when I am an officer? Many succeed in it. It is a mystery, and one must believe it like the others. This whole France is mysterious. Yesterday I saw a new example of the difficulty of commanding and the cleverness of a chief. We were crowded together in a stable, very near the lines, sitting or lying on the remains of manure and cow bedding. The rain was falling through holes in the roof, and forced the poor lads to draw back who had begun to stretch out under them. As a shell had wounded one of the cooks and upset one of the kettles, our group had had only half of the customary allowance. The captain came in, a pale little man, having a broken nose with a lump on the end, firm eyes, a red beard cut fan-shaped. His men said of him:

"He is severe, but he never punishes unjustly."

He is finer than that. He sat down among us, and precisely as if he had chosen the spot, in one of those open places where the rain fell.

"Well, children?"

"We can't stand any more."

"No doubt."

"We have no shelter; we are wet through."

Grumbling and complaints came thicker than the rain. By the pale light which came through the roof and the two windows without glass he looked kindly at the soldiers crowded there for a hard night; he never objected to any of the complaints, he did not argue, he had a soft voice, and he knew them thoroughly. For when they had sworn, raged, declared that they could not live like that, accused the rain, the wind, those who had not prepared for the war, and those who were carrying it on, he said, in a voice which had suddenly become strong:

"That doesn't prevent your being a crack battalion."

"Certainly; nobody can say the contrary."

"Well, suppose the Boches attack to-night?"

A man answered from the back corner of the stable, "We should have to go!"

None of the others objected to what he said. The officer rose, wished good night to every one in the stable, and left us to sleep. So with their minds full of revolutionary ideas they obeyed all the same, not so much authority as common sense and honor. I am no longer surprised that France was attacked; she is the rampart. Her sons, ignorant of their nobility, blaspheming their faith, are nevertheless the crusaders of the eternal crusade. I realized it that day. I am often tempted to find fault with this country which I have chosen. How did I choose it? Like a child, and for the same motives—those of my imagination and my heart. It was with enthusiasm that I followed the lesson of my blood and of the stories which the old men told. But what ignorance! And how many things that I see irritate and frighten me! At the most trying moments I need an episode like that which I have just told to show me what remains of the injured masterpiece. It is still very beautiful!

Remember me in your prayers, Mademoiselle Marie, that I may become as French as you are!

I have seen better. This people is extraordinary; it does everything that it can to make itself ill thought of, then all of a sudden the human and divine masterpiece reappears. Two days later we went back into the trenches. The print is there of shells everywhere, as thick as drops in a shower. Oh, the poor wheat sowed in the autumn! The fields no longer looked like fields, but before us, under the moon, there was only a plain pitted with craters which made so many shadows; if one half closed his eyes, he would have sworn that he saw the sea after a tempest, streaked with foam, with wreckage, with streams of sand and mud. Half a dozen posts on which there remained a few branches were still called the Bois de la Haie, which was, on our right, one of the German strongholds which we had not been able to take. The fire had greatly diminished since the great attack, but shells still burst frequently over our line, and our own passed over us to fall upon the enemy. The night was not safe, but it was dry. My comrades, and I, too, were in a better humor. At ten o'clock we set out on a detail for carrying wood through the communication trenches to the engineers who were constructing a shelter a kilometer from there. We were carrying, some on our left shoulders, some on our right, and supported by our raised arm a long, thick beam, still heavy with sap, and with the bark on. Some carried on their backs a bundle of stout slats, tied together with cords, which would serve as tapestry to the walls of the shelter. It was long, fatiguing, and the load was heavy. Four men walked ahead of me, and there were others behind. One did not think of anything much. The complaining voice of the poor humanity which is imprisoned in us kept saying over and over again, "When shall we be through suffering, carrying things, traveling at night, under the grape-shot?" At a point where the line turned a shell fell, but did no harm to any one. Nevertheless, the man who was at the head stopped and, coming up one after another, closing the intervals, as close as possible to see what was happening, we filled the trench. What was it? A chaplain, clad in cassock,

cape, and fatigue-cap. He was backed up against the left wall, to let us pass. But was he not seeking us? The leading chasseur, a tall, fair-haired man, said to him:

"Have you the Host?"

He had seen on the *abbé's* breast, under the cloak which was thrown back, the clasp of the little gold pyx. It was in order that this question might be asked him that the *abbé* had come in the night with his golden jewel and the treasure which it contained. He asked, "Do you want to take the communion?" There were fewer words than nods. Then he said, "Repent of your sins and I will give you absolution." In a moment the beams were laid on the ground; all these men except two knelt in the mud and waited devoutly. I was one of them. The priest made his way with difficulty between the posts and the men, and gave us the communion one after the other. Immediately each of us hoisted his load on his shoulders again, the file was formed anew, and we continued our work. Some souls at peace made in this way their thanksgivings in the night. It was like a church on the march. The cannon rumbled about us. The chaplain went away to other soldiers passing along.

Then and on other occasions I have seen Frenchmen full of the same faith which animates us. Elsewhere I have heard the most frightful speeches against religion, against God. The man of this nation who has lost his faith feels obscurely the reproach of his ancestors and his desertion of the French vocation. Free-thinking, with you, is more intolerant than in America and England; it hears the reproach of history which condemns it.

This time M. de Clairepée's reply was different in tone from those which preceded it.

Monsieur [he wrote], I know of you only what you nave told me. But it is enough for you to have gained my friendship. I beg you not to bear me ill-will if, the first

day that I talked to you in the hospital where chance had brought you, I showed myself so sensitive, so rude, perhaps, in the defense of a country which is very evidently your own, but which you know but imperfectly, even though loving it already. Your instinct does not deceive you. I am sure that your ancestors, at the time when Alsace gave itself to the King of France, were offended, as you have been, in more than one respect, when the garrisons marched in, and changed their obedience while finding fault with the orders of their new governors. Henceforth, you are not only on the road to understand this misunderstood and incomparable country; the way is open. Continue to write to us [he had written "us"]; do not hesitate to speak still more ill of her whom I do not pretend to be without fault, but who is not responsible for many of her falls, any more than you would have been for yours, if we had given you crutches or canes of reed. My daughter wishes me to tell you that your letter has touched her. I press your hand.

CLAIREPÉE.

Fourth letter from Pierre:

April 30th. I am perhaps indiscreet in sending you another letter so soon after having written you. The never-to-be-forgotten hosts of L'Abadié will pardon me; I have a happiness to announce to them. And it is a possession so rare, especially for us people of the disputed land of Alsace, that I must share it. It is not an unmixed joy, you will understand. Here it is. My mother has written me that my brother Joseph, from whom she had not heard for many weeks, has left a distant garrison in Germany, where he was kept in reserve with many others. He has been sent to Poland. He has been fighting against the Russians for over two months. The frightful nightmare has disappeared, of the possibility of a brother's killing his brother. At present it seems to me that I shall never again be afraid of anything.

The letter reached my mother through Switzerland. It is dated the beginning of March.

Fifth letter from Pierre:

May 15th. I do not know whether the nurse who bestows such tender kindness on the wounded of St.-Baudile will not be tempted to feel sorry again for one of her former patients who has been wounded once more. She would be wrong, and I wish to prevent her from being touched, in spite of the happiness which I should feel in imagining her pity. It was almost nothing, a piece of shell in the upper part of my left arm, but it has obliged me to go to the rear. We attacked north of Arras on the 9th. Alas! I have seen the most frightful sight; it is not the field of battle; it is the crowd of wounded and dying waiting at the doors of a hospital. There was a whole people there, standing or lying down, filling the court, above which they had stretched great awnings which shook in the wind. Every moment automobiles were stopping at the door; squads of nurses carried on stretchers more young men covered with blood. They ranged the new-comers alongside those who had been waiting since morning, some stretched on mattresses, others on a cloak, still others on the ground. If the detail tried to make their way farther into these lines of human suffering voices arose:

"Not this way! Let each one take his turn! Leave them by the gate; we are the first!"

I could stand in spite of weakness, and I was leaning against the pillar of a woodshed, on the left of the court. Five surgeons were operating in the hospital as rapidly as possible; a senior assistant would come out of the central door from time to time, and as soon as he appeared all heads turned toward him. He was going to choose; there would be one elect, two, perhaps three; the death whose approach they could feel would be driven away, the blood which was

running stopped. Murmurs, prayers, cries, moans, went up to him; there were even some which came from the ends of the court, poor voices which he could not hear. They said to him:

"Me, me! I am suffering so! I came before the man next me who has already been operated on! I have been waiting for two hours! I am going to die! Hurry up! Major, Major, please take me!"

Each one tried to find the right argument, or look, or gesture. The surgeon, as though insensible, signed to the bearers who kept behind him to take this one, then that one, then the other. He left some to die whom he considered it impossible to operate on. And some abused him:

"What you are doing is horrible!"

Others, seeing that they were not to be carried in, turned away their heads and were silent. But there, as elsewhere, I saw extraordinary moral beauties. One of those nearest the door of the hospital, quite young, with hair cropped short, a pale face, and eyes closed, lay on a stretcher with his hands folded on the cape with which they had covered his breast. He did not ask for anything; he must have heard everything. The surgeon came up to him and said to the nurses:

"Take him up!"

Then the right hand of the dying man separated from the other and made a gesture, "Leave me."

The eyes opened, eyes which I saw only for a second, and the lips said, "No, the man next me is suffering more than I am." They left him and he died.

Sixth letter from Pierre:

May 24th. Certainly, monsieur, everything is not fine in the army zone, and I beg your pardon for telling the bad as I have told the good. I seek for good and I find it, but there is bad everywhere. My wound being too slight—

it is almost cured, for that matter—for me to be sent to a distance, I lived in one of those villages through which troops are always passing. The demoralization there is almost universal. Young or already almost old, pretty, pleasing, or ugly, the women, living in the midst of this multitude of men, infantry, cavalry, pioneers, soldiers from the black regiments or regiments from Algeria, obliged to give up to the troops the greater part of their houses or their farms, all day long looked at, watched, spoken to, brushed against, coaxed with presents, courted, almost all of them for the first time in their lives, cannot resist so many examples, influences, and temptations. They become mad; there is no more morality, no faithfulness, no honor. The military regulations are overflowing with measures of precaution and repression. The immense amount of useless printed matter in this country is one of the kingdoms of the dead. Nothing less than saintliness would be needed for a woman to remain pure in one of these poor villages; but the education given in France does not aim to create saints; all weaknesses come from that. As the war opens the door to all the demons of hell, I think with infinite pity of the grief of the men who are fighting and have left their wives in one of these houses. They often know what is going on; a number are preparing vengeance which will fall later on, during the months after the war. When peace has been signed it will not have been made. It will need years for that.

XI

HUBERT

JUNE, the month of the very hot days, had killed all the short-lived flora of the *garigue*, and the dwarf shrubs themselves were languishing. Marie, tired from work on one of these days of sunshine, back at L'Abadié by six o'clock, was seated on a wooden bench near the house in the entrance court. One could see from there what went on on the road. Marie was thinking of that correspondence brought about by a word from M. de Clairepée, and which was, in fact, without any definite words of love, only the renewed confession of a growing affection. In his fourth letter Pierre had written:

"The never-to-be-forgotten Abadié."

Everything was comprised in that word, but was not another and much stronger proof the sort of joy with which the Alsatian sought and discovered unknown reasons which had drawn him toward France? Marie said to herself:

"He is pleading his cause with me, and my father lets it go on."

In the last ray of the sun, the hottest of all,

that which is level with the ground, which lights up the under sides of the leaves, and the hearts of the flowers, and the sides of stones even into the holes dug by the rain, she was looking at the chimneys of the house which had become purple, and at that row of tiles on the roof which, having received too much dust and too many seeds of moss, could only claim as its supreme brightness that of red gold. She heard some one walking on the road on the side of St.-Baudile, and instantly rose to her feet. The step of a man is a very faint clue, yet she was sure that the traveler was coming to L'Abadié and that he was coming on her account. In fact, it was the postman, who had forgotten in the morning a letter from Hubert, which he gave her. Hubert said that he was soon coming home.

Marie, leaves of absence are beginning, and mine will be one of the first signed. What a joy to come! What a joy to see my father, you, the child, and that fourth being whom I love, Provence! What a pity that I missed the spring! Provence of the blue shadows, Provence in summer, I shall see you, but the war has robbed me of the heavenly hours in which you only give promise! Marie, do you recollect our walks in May, 1914, by the road to Château-Renard, through the wild garden of the Little Crau? We found both tribes in flower, that which is armed to live and the other which one would say was only born to die too soon, after such a short-lived splendor. We came back with our arms loaded with bundles. My share was especially the boughs of dwarf shrubs, with tough leaves so richly sculptured, and with which you adorned your "Month of Mary"; lentiscus

from which the bees bring back an aromatic and detestable honey, but also buckthorn with its thousand little green cups where they get drunk; the oak with leaves like holly whose acorn with curved spikes catches in the fleece of the sheep; the rock-roses which formed red and yellow clumps; the broom, and above all the Spanish broom, very fragrant, sugary sweet, which balances its golden boats at the top of smooth reed stalks, and whose new flower—do you recollect?—bursts at the touch of a fly and covers it with pollen. We had nooks where we were sure to find, between the rocks or in the sand or in hollows which have kept a drop of water, quantities of asphodel, white and veined with violet; or bunches of our "bec de passéroun"; or again, that lily which we call the dragon, delicate but strong, which holds up to the blazing sun its six amethyst petals; sometimes—you sang when you saw it—the bee orchid, brown and purple; sometimes the "pied de perdrix," or the coronilla, and above these flowers, what wings in motion all day long!

Marie, even in July the *garigue* will be beautiful; dry, stark, dying with thirst, I love it still. Perhaps Meste François Bouillet will go with me; he must know where the hares lie, and in what solitude, between the pebbles and the dry grass, the new arrivals, the quail, have made their nests.

I have stood a year of war; I have been so near death that life, real life, will appear infinitely sweet to me.

A few days later, as Mademoiselle de Clairepée was at the same place, and almost at the same hour, she rose again on hearing some one walking in the distance. She cried:

"Hubert!"

A strong, full, warm voice replied, "Here I am!" And then, in a deeper tone, "Ah, Marie, Marie, what happiness!"

They kissed each other on the road. Instantly,

as though the minutes were so precious that in keeping them for themselves they would be robbing some one:

"Come and see papa; he is there!"

"Where?"

"In the garden; he is digging because the gardener has left. You knew about it?"

"No, I don't know about it."

"Yes, yes, come!"

And, laughing, arm in arm, they crossed the courtyard, calling out together as they passed: "Good evening, Marine! It is Hubert! It is I! Good evening!" and before the old servant could even come out of the kitchen cut diagonally across the terrace, running in step, light, delicious to see, they reached the end of the garden at the foot of the apricot and pomegranate trees, in the orchard where, bareheaded, wearing a flannel shirt and trousers, the master of L'Abadié was finishing breaking up the clods of a bed for the September lettuce. When he saw his son, M. de Clairepée's face changed. What a distance there was between his thoughts and those of his two children who were hurrying toward him! He did not smile; he was near crying. Joy, which has its morrows, had too often deceived him for him to be captured by its first "good morning." He kissed Hubert, stepped back a couple of paces, dropping his spade and taking his coat, which was hanging from the low branch of a shrub.

"You have grown stronger; you look well; you are magnificent. Are all your comrades like you?"

"All those who are not dead or wounded."

He laughed as he said this, this Hubert full of youth, escaped from danger, and who was coming back to his own countryside. But his father remained grave, and it was with an effort that he pretended to smile as he said:

"Your Maurice is superb, too. We have taken good care of him, Marie, Marine, and I."

"Come and see him," said Marie.

At the other end of the garden Marine was already coming, bringing the child, whom she had just dressed in a new costume and who recognized his father in uniform, and admired him and kissed him, as though he understood about the war.

They had a fine evening in the drawing-room, with the windows open. They talked of the war, then of small family matters, about the farm and about St.-Baudile. Hubert listened to the news of the house with the courteous curiosity of a man who no longer has any curiosity. Neither the departure of the gamekeeper nor the refusal of the tenant, Maximin Fustier, to pay his rent seemed to affect him, though he had been alive to the smallest incidents of country life. He quickly came back to stories of the regiment. He drew after him these dear souls, anxious, frightened, touched, whose imagination could see

only one thing in these swiftly drawn pictures of the war—the danger which Hubert had run—and who trembled for a while, then, wishing to get out of that, to escape from the war, took up again the story of their every-day life, and said:

"You will not be sorry to have news of the Clarenses; they are millionaires now. And good Madame de la Move, a model head nurse, with a charity which never wearies at watching all night or talking all day. She is admirable; if she could only see you!"

"Oh no. I have something better to do. To-morrow— Papa, have you taken care of my gun?"

"I oiled it twice myself," said Marie. "There is not a speck of rust on it."

"Very well; to-morrow I shall open the quail season."

"You would not think of such a thing," broke in M. de Clairepée. "What would the gendarmes say? The end of June?"

"My dear father, the gendarmes are men who are not fighting, and now they must obey people like us, who are fighting. Do you think, do you really think that a man who has been fighting eleven months and has risked his life a hundred times can be prevented from killing a quail? It is the open season for hunting Boches for us, and consequently for everything else. I have no dog, since the spaniel has rheumatism, but Bouisset will not refuse to lend me his Mirza, which

crouches before a quail as we do before a barrage. So I shall start at six o'clock in the morning. I shall begin with the Grande Garigue, I shall go on up across the Petit Crau and the Olivettes, the stony fields, the brambles, and the burned place, to the top, do you remember, where we fired sixty shots one opening day?"

M. de Clairepée, flattered, rejuvenated by the ringing voice and by this eagerness and by the memories which brought back from so far pleasures which he thought dead, grew more and more in tune with the others. The conversation between the father, the son, and Marie was much like those which they used to hold formerly at the farm of L'Abadié when the world was at peace—much, but not altogether. At times the eyes which looked at the strong young face, at the cavalry uniform, received too sharp an impression, too different from the memories and plans of which they were talking, and then they became silent, and it required a certain effort to go on saying:

"I have already spoken to Marine; you will find some bread and butter and some wine on the dining-room table; the cartridges are in the closet in the spare room. Nobody has touched them."

When they rose and started up the stairs which led to the bedrooms M. de Clairepée stayed behind with Hubert. He took his arm, as if to assure himself that he really had there, close to

him, his son, his Hubert, alive, happy, without a wound. He asked him in a low voice:

"Tell me, between ourselves; this war—"

If the candle which Marie was carrying a few meters above could have lighted the officer's face, his father would have seen that Hubert's face took on a very different expression from what it had worn till then.

"Frightful," said the young man. "I can tell it to you—between the war of which I dreamed and that which we are engaged in there is as much difference as between a tournament and a slaughter-house. But Marie must not know that."

They both looked at the young girl, who had reached the landing and, turning half round, was waiting for them, quite happy.

The next day for more than an hour they could hear in L'Abadié the shots of this hunter whom the war had turned into a poacher, and who must have started quail and even partridge, perhaps, in the weeds and low shrubs of the *garigues*. Then the shots grew farther off. Hubert had told them that he would not be back for luncheon, but in fact he did not get back till after four o'clock, and so tired that it was impossible for him to talk as he had done the night before, and to spend the evening with his father and Marie. He had scarcely finished his dinner when he went to bed. The next morning he amused himself like a mother till lunch-time with Maurice, whom he had sent for into his room.

That day was the last, for before coming to L'Abadié Hubert had spent thirty-six hours with his wife's family, good people to whom he had remained faithful after her death. They lived on an estate a little more to the southward than L'Abadié, close to the line from Lyons to Marseilles. M. de Clairepée, who wished to take advantage of these last hours which his son would spend in Provence, scarcely left him from noon to dinner-time, so that Marie, who had got leave from the hospital, found only a few minutes in which to talk to Hubert about a matter of which she did not speak to any one. As M. de Clairepée was receiving a neighbor in the drawing-room, Marie and Hubert went up to the top of the *garigue*, under the old olive-trees. They sat down on the bare grass and Marie began at once:

"I have a secret, Hubert."

"Love?"

"Of course! I am going to tell you about it! I don't know what to do, and you will advise me."

While she talked and told him about Pierre's stay in the hospital, and the dinner at L'Abadié, and the return of the men who had been wounded and how a correspondence had sprung up between Pierre and M. de Clairepée, her brother, to whom this love-story recalled so many memories, became sad. Marie did not perceive it. She was wholly wrapped up in her subject, in this question which she had asked herself so many times:

"Ought I to let Pierre Ehrsam understand

that we should not be sorry to know him better, that he has entire permission to speak of himself and of memories which are not military?"

When, with a moderation which her desire to win her suit did not cause her to abandon, she had praised Pierre's strong character, his uprightness, his simple courage, and his beauty, she leaned forward, trying to catch Hubert's eyes, which were aimlessly wandering among the olive-trees.

"You want my advice? Are you certain of having said nothing?"

"Yes."

"Then keep your secret."

"I have said nothing, but since he writes to my father with the hope that his letters will be read by me, if I do not stop this correspondence I encourage it; I accept this attention; I entertain the idea that Monsieur Pierre Ehrsam may ask my hand in marriage, and my secret is only half a secret."

"Keep that half, then; do not engage yourself."

She put her hand in that of her brother, who persisted in not looking at Marie.

"Do you want to pain me?"

"Oh no!"

"What is the matter, then? You will leave me troubled for a long time. You are cruel."

"I am sorry for you, on the contrary, and for him to whom I am indifferent."

"You mean to say that I am mistaken?"

"I am afraid so."

"What do you know about him?"

"His name, his age, and his love; but, Marie, this is not the time to love."

Marie and Hubert rose and went down the hill. Hubert kept close to his sister, who said:

"I certainly can reproach myself with being weak."

"You, who are so strong?"

"To-morrow, to-night, I shall think that you do not approve of me. I shall believe that you are right, but I feel that I shall not take your advice."

"I have not the slightest doubt of it. Even though the stars fall out of the sky and the sun grows dark, people will continue to love— Don't be unhappy, and above all don't believe that I disapprove of your choice. I have not the slightest doubt of what you have told me, Marie. You and my father, especially you, ought not to be mistaken. But I have suffered, and I would like to spare you a similar suffering."

"How little power the kindest words have!"

"Alas!"

"I am tempted to ask your pardon."

He wanted to start early in the afternoon, in order to take the departmental railroad at Château-Renard, instead of going to the main line, at the foot of the Montagnette.

"I shall go on foot. Marie, will you go with me?"

She was ready. M. de Clairepée and Maurice watched them go off down the road, and went

back into the house. They walked along the edge of the plain, in the burning sun. Marie had opened her umbrella and, raising it higher than usual, was sharing its shade with this tall captain of dragoons, who laughed and let her do it. So long as they felt themselves in sight of the house they were silent and hurried. Then they began to talk, so sweetly that they did not remember passing so short an hour together. He said:

"You cannot comprehend the value of the pictures which I am taking away. All my Provence is in my eyes, all my love is revived. I found you just what I dreamed; nothing has changed at L'Abadié. The fortune is the same, the intelligence also, in the poor house, full of relics. As for you, you are handsomer."

"You think so?"

"There was something a little too peaceful which has disappeared."

"Is it anxiety which you find beautiful? Anxiety for you, for Maurice, for the wounded—"

"For Pierre the Alsatian?"

"I have already told you you are the plague of my life."

"Marie, you are no longer a child. The war has drawn your soul closer to your face. One can divine from the windows that the lamps are lighted."

"Poet!"

"And that makes me tremble! Suppose the wind blew suddenly in the sanctuary—"

They talked in an undertone; they might have been taken for a pair of lovers. Because of their very youth they talked of sad things with a smile and without believing in them. She, at any rate, did not believe in them. Their eyes wandered with delight over the plain, which had no shadow except at the foot of the black cypresses, and that shadow was blue, as Hubert had said.

When they entered Château-Renard they were seen by people who were working in the shade. A number said:

"He is handsome, the Clairepée, péchaire! it is a pity that so good-looking a lad must go and fight."

But there were others who replied, "What, don't you know that the rich never fight?"

"Are you sure of it?"

"I have been told so."

The heat was overwhelming. An odor of ripe fruit escaped from the half-closed shops, which seemed deserted. The plane-trees in the main street already had some yellow leaves. When they reached there, Marie, who thought that her brother would go straight to the station, saw him cross the street and take a steep little path which climbs the hill.

"Where are you going?"

At the same time she recollected that Hubert, who was passionately fond of music, had more than once spent the afternoon playing the organ up there in the gallery of the church, and she went on:

"I can guess; we had no organ at L'Abadié, and you are one of those who sing when their hearts are sad."

"Yes, Marie, I will sing, but not sadly."

The church on the new place is squat and new; it has umbrella pines around the back. Marie said quickly:

"Either your regrets are short lived, you who fight, or you deceive us."

"Never believe it!"

"How can you write letters which are enthusiastic, gay, mad, on the eve of battles in which you might be killed, where your comrades are going to be killed in thousands? Truly, it is a mystery!"

"Yes, a mystery of love!"

"What are you doing when you lie to us in this way?"

"We are saying good-by to you. Leaving a pleasant memory of ourselves, a bright and smiling picture. A number have tried to do it. I am one of them, if you like."

He said this gravely, like one uttering a truth of religion to which the heart is attached. They both entered the church. Marie remained in the white nave, and soon Hubert, who had notified the sacristan, was playing on the organ of Château-Renard, in the solitude of the church, of the place, of the rock which supports the towers. He improvised for a quarter of an hour, the last of his leave; he told his sorrow, his story,

his dreams, his whole youth, like others; then, to finish what he had to say, calling out all the power of the organ, till the sacristan was out of breath, he played the "Magnificat," making the walls and windows tremble.

Then he came swiftly down, and at the door kissed Marie, who was weeping.

They parted. As she watched him going away she murmured, "I understand only one thing; it is that they were made for the greatest hour in the history of France!"

Hubert wrote, three days later, a few words on a postal card:

When I reached the rail-head I learned that my regiment was no longer in the north, and I immediately set out again in a slow train. Happily the nights are fine. I think that I shall join my comrades to-morrow morning. I should not be surprised if the regiment were in action soon. The news is good, which is an answer to one of my prayers. Do not worry about anything before I tell you it is time to.

Nevertheless they did worry at L'Abadié; then another letter explained that Hubert was in Lorraine, in a part which he said was quiet. The newspapers published long articles of the battles of Picardy and the capture of Thiaumont.

"What dangers he has escaped!" said Marie.

Seventh letter from Pierre:

July 8th. Not far from the lines I met a peasant, an old man, in the field which he had plowed, harrowed, and sowed, and then weeded, to the sound of the cannon, and sometimes

like a soldier, without caring for stray shells which fall beyond the trenches. He had come to see if his wheat was responding to this high-class labor. I was resting before returning to the cantonment. I saw the man go into an irrigating ditch between two beds of wheat. He was tall, but the stalks were as high as he was, all equal, all adorned with the whiskers of the green heads, with the tiny white flakes which are the flower of the wheat. The wind was blowing from the east. I said to him:

"It might have cost you dear, but you will have a fine harvest."

"Yes," he said to me, "and the weather is good for wheat. When it is in flower it needs wind, for the heads rub against each other and the wind makes them fertile."

I asked him: "Who weeded? You have not got a weed."

"My wife, my daughters, my little boy."

"Did nobody go away?"

He pointed to a broken-down roof a little distance away, between some trees.

"One can still live there," he said.

I asked the name of his farm. It is called The Matutinerie, the Morning Farm, the farm of those who rise at dawn and do not lose a minute of the day.

M. de Clairepée, who ordinarily read the letters and then passed them to Marie without a word, said this time:

"The boy is a poet, which does not displease me."

"The house in which we are has known more than one," replied Marie.

Eighth letter from Pierre:

July 15th. I had a talk near the hospital in the street which leads to the station, with the people who had been

driven out of a village which the enemy had held for nearly a year and which was recovered last month. How, why were they brought here? They do not know. By what road? They scarcely know that. They go, having no will left, no strength, sent away, brought back, indifferent, humble, like water, which adapts itself to any shape. I met them, and they asked me the road to the station; that was our introduction. We went together to the brick building where they will wait once more. The three to whom I spoke told me something of their feelings, and that is the reason why I repeat it here, since I have not permission to express my own.

An old man wearing a frock-coat, carrying on his back a bundle wrapped in a cloth sewed together, a man at least seventy years old, with a somewhat distracted look, his forehead half covered by white locks from the ends of which ran perspiration, said to me:

"They tell me that my son is dead, monsieur; I learned it the day we were delivered. We must say delivered, but we cannot say happy, can we? Yes, I learned it, with all the details, from a soldier who saw my child fall. Nevertheless, I was present the next day when a regiment marched by. There were several thousands, in new blue uniforms, handsome lads, young, of his age. I was not looking for him, although I always have him in my thoughts. And as truly as you are before me, I saw him. There were his blue eyes, which always looked ahead, his little curled-up mustache, his springy step. I thought that he was going to turn his head; I even called him. Not loud enough, I suppose, for he went straight on. I could not run. But nobody will prevent my believing that he was there, that I saw him, that I shall find him again."

A woman was walking at my left, strong, alert, whose cheeks must often have laughed, round as an apple, in the days of prosperity.

"Mine," she said, "is certainly dead. They buried him at the corner of a wood. I know the spot; I have a map

with a cross which marks where they laid him. His name is on the cross, with the picture of the military medal which they gave him at his death, indeed a little while before it. The only thing I care for now is to find my house. It is the only place where I can weep in comfort. It was pretty, and clean on a Saturday night as a new sou. When my husband came back from work—he is in the army, too—he used to laugh at the house, it was so clean. It is all fallen down now. We lived in the cellar, with other people of the neighborhood. We paid for it with our wages, all except two hundred and seventy-three francs, which we still owed to the company. Who must we apply to, to have it rebuilt?"

A quite young woman, worn out, silent since we met, was carrying in her arms a child a few weeks old. She seemed to carry it without love, never lowering her eyes to it, never bringing back into the hollow of her arms the cottony, bloodless, abandoned head, which rolled about when she walked. Not wishing to neglect her, since I had spoken to the others, I said to her:

"He is a pretty baby."

"No."

"Let me kiss him."

"No."

"Why?"

Without a movement of her face she replied: "He is a Boche. I am bringing him up because we ought not to kill babies—"

"Oh, I understand!"

Her poor gray gown blew about in the wind.

"But when he grows up I will send him to Germany to kill his father."

July 26th. We are in Artois, in a sector where the *communiqués* in the middle of May announced that we had advanced our lines four kilometers on a front of ten. There are no more houses, but the country is still beautiful in places.

I was promoted sergeant a week ago. I was coming back toward the rear with my section. Signs of the battle were everywhere. Still, in the middle of the plain there was a field of wheat. Four long beds were covered with a ripe crop, which suggested fresh bread. It was six o'clock in the morning, the hour of strong perfumes. All the men pointed to the wheat:

"The Boches planted it, but they will not have it. It is ripe."

One of them took a head in his hand and crushed it, then blew on the little balls of wheat, which blew away. I said:

"Will nobody harvest it?"

Some one called out: "Let's do it! I will! I will, too."

For a moment I regretted the word which I had spoken. The commandant was waiting for us. I tried to keep the men in ranks. Go and ask discipline from French peasants who see that a field of wheat is going to be lost! In a few seconds the soldiers dropped their knapsacks, their guns, their haversacks, their canteens. They began to cut the wheat, some with knives, some with their bayonets, which they used like sickles. They hurried over the job, like a band of pillagers. When the whole field was reaped they made bands of bits of string and handkerchiefs, and with straw, too. Every one placed his sheaf on top of his knapsack, which was full and heavy already, and we returned to the cantonment, a league off, carrying on our shoulders grain which had been sown, had ripened and had been reaped within sound of the cannon. The cheers of our comrades greeted us. The colonel came out of the notary's house, smiled, and said:

"Give a quart of Pinard to the reapers."

And I ate some of this first victory bread; it is delicious.

"Marie," said M. de Clairepée, "he has a fine soul."

"I agree with you."

"He addresses me, but it is you of whom he is thinking."

"Very possibly."

"He must have thought me very dull not to have understood. On the other hand, I cannot oblige him to tell me the whole history of the war, and to send him in reply only words of thanks which tire me and do not satisfy him. It cannot go on."

"Suppose you ask him—"

"I do not feel disposed to discuss love-affairs. It is so long since— I should be clumsy at it. Do you believe in his honor?"

"Absolutely."

"If he declares that he loves you, would you accept him?"

"Not at once; I would study."

"But you do not refuse to consider the idea of being loved by him and loving him?"

"I think I have already begun."

"Then question him yourself."

"Oh!"

"It will be more prompt, and clearer, and better done. Answer him; we will see later."

M. de Clairepée went away without daring to turn back.

Marie remained alone for half an hour, leaning against the piano in the darkness of the shut-up drawing-room. She could feel her heart open in her breast and joy pour into it and fill it. There was no sound in the house. Outside the cicadaæ

were shaking off the rays of the sun, which rebounded from their wings, like the thick, new hay which the haymakers toss from their forks.

Answer? Yes, she would answer this evening and mail the letter the next morning. But to whom could she tell her secret right away? Having no intimate friend, no mother nor aunt living up-stairs in a room with dark hangings and walls hung with rosaries, she went and opened the door of the terrace and called Maurice.

He came at a gallop, with outstretched arms and eyes shining with passionate love, and sprang astride across Marie's knees, where she was sitting on the lowest of the steps which led into the garden, between the two clumps of mignonette, which grew there traditionally, without any one's ever sowing them or digging up the earth at their feet.

"Here I am, Aunt Marie! Are you going out?"

"No."

"Ah yes! You are going out. Will you take me? You are so sweet, Aunt Marie."

She kissed him, and held him tight while he struggled.

"My son, my son Maurice!"

Then, loosening her embrace, she looked into the clear, attentive eyes with her own look, which had become tender and questioning, and said:

"Do you remember Monsieur Pierre Lancier?"

"No, aunt."

"The one who sang on the day of the Three Kings?"

"Ah, the gentleman who is at the war and who walks with sticks?"

"You like him, don't you? You would be glad if he came back?"

The child did not answer yes, but passed his hand over Marie's cheek coaxingly and closed his eyes, as if to say, in his own fashion:

"Rest is here, you are my happiness. I love you first, and I am indifferent to the man you spoke of. If I understood everything I would answer you differently; I am only a little child who loves you, my aunt-mother Marie."

She saw that she would get from Maurice none of the encouragement to love which she expected from him, and that she was wholly alone.

"Listen! Go and pick the most beautiful flowers. Choose carefully; take plenty of time. I will send him one of the three from you."

The child, who asked nothing better than to amuse himself, left at once, and began by running round the garden; then he walked round it slowly, stopping every little while.

That night, seated at her table in the room on the first floor, Marie wrote by the light which the sun leaves after him in the sky:

L'Abadié, *July 30, 1915.*

Monsieur,—My father said to me a little while ago, after having read your last letter, the ninth, if I am not mistaken

—(she was sure that she was not mistaken)—that it is I who ought to answer you. He thought that these letters which you have been sending him, from the front or the rear, for the last six months, and which interested and touched him, were a means of making yourself known to him, but perhaps also to me. Some words which he repeated, others which you spoke to me at L'Abadié when you were about to leave and Maximin Fustier was waiting to take you back to St.-Baudile, appeared to my father impossible to explain in any other way. Perhaps he is mistaken. In his name, as in my own, I come to ask it. We have both of us such confidence in your honor that it is not painful to me to do this. Be just as frank as you see that I am toward you. If it was only the desire to have some proof that you were remembered in the house of friends which prompted you, or if you wrote only to while away hours of loneliness, say so without hesitation, and do not consider yourself obliged to add useless compliments. You will go on fighting for a great cause which you have understood, and I will continue to live here among my duties as daughter, aunt, nurse, friend of a number of fine people. You will be assured that we shall retain a pleasant and lasting recollection of you, of your honesty, your bravery, your conversation that evening. If, on the contrary, you have other reasons for wishing your letters to continue to come to L'Abadié, say so also. But let us not in any way remain in a state of indefiniteness; it is a condition which is utterly repugnant to my mind as well as my heart.

When she had finished this letter Marie went to the open window, through which came the air of the plain, still warm. A young man, a shepherd, no doubt, returning from St.-Baudile, was singing as he went through the meadows, on the other side of the road. And she recognized a song which she knew very well:

I have moments of languor
When I do not know where I am,
Thinking that on the mountain
There is some one who is thinking of me.

After a short silence the voice, well placed, passionate, sang the refrain, then went on with the next verse:

But if my grandmother knew
That I was talking to a woodman!

When I see him coming down
With his blackthorn fagots
I feel that my heart is melting
And that I am happy!

But if my grandmother knew
That I talk to a woodman!

The voice grew more distant, and all that was heard on the plain was the confused murmur which rises from the country at night, when neither the water nor the trees nor the animals are wholly silent.

The next day the letter went. Another day passed.

The day after that, as Marie was coming back from the hospital and was just going through the gate of the farm, she heard some one crying behind her. She did not turn round, but as she had had experience in human suffering and its importunity, she presumed that in this case, as in others, her

help was sought. She was not mistaken. She was overtaken in the court of L'Abadié by a woman whose face was hidden in the folds of a handkerchief.

"Ah, mademoiselle, mademoiselle!"

Marie had only to turn her head half round to recognize the fat woman, clad in a black gown with white spots, wearing at her neck in a medallion the photograph of a man still young, with a vulgar and determined face.

"What is the matter, my poor Madame Clarens?"

The woman held out her arms toward a distant spot which could not be seen, but which she saw in imagination.

"Would you believe it? All my trouble comes from our being rich now. Since my husband has been working for the war he has greatly changed toward me; he regards me as a workwoman, and, you know, he is not fond of his workpeople. I am too old, and not handsome enough; he has turned me out."

"It is only a momentary irritation."

"You do not know him. He has been waiting for news from Paris for ten days, the acceptance of a contract for supplies for three millions, on which he will make a profit of at least one. Just now he learned that the minister had signed it; he received the official notification. I was there. I said, 'That's good,' and went up to him. But he pushed me away brutally, crying: 'Now for

the pretty girls. I have found what I want. Old woman, you get out!'"

The wife of the shell-manufacturer had no relatives, and she had very few friends in the neighborhood. She told her troubles to Marie at great length. She was one of those unfortunate people who are stunned by the blow which strikes them, and are incapable of resolution and effort, able only to sigh and weep. Consequently Mademoiselle de Clairepée, looking at the old farm-house, where there were always unoccupied rooms, ended by proposing to Madame Clarens that she should occupy "temporarily" a room which was used as a lumber-room, over the kitchen, and connected with it by a back staircase.

Three days later Madame Clarens, finding the hospitality of the farm satisfactory, gave up the idea of finding another refuge. She helped Marie, began to make Maurice love her, and finally gave signs of recovering her serenity.

Now this woman, who had been half transformed into a bourgeoise by being fairly well off, and who could neither return to her former life nor get along without gossip nor go back to St.-Baudile "for fear of meeting Clarens," never failed, since she lived at L'Abadié, to take a piece of knitting or sewing at sunset, and sit with her back to the grille, beside the road where men and women passed whom she knew. More than one would leave the group of companions and come to speak to their former mistress, whose

misfortune was already known over the whole of Provence. It was in talking to one of these workmen on the evening of the fourth day that she learned of an event which was to shake the lives of M. de Clairepée and his daughter to their foundations. A cavalryman, with his haversack on his back, on his way to the neighboring station, left two women and two old men with whom he was walking, came to speak to Madame Clarens, and said to her:

"They don't know, then?"

"What?"

"The son is dead."

"Monsieur Hubert de Clairepée?"

"Killed without there having been an attack—in making his rounds in the trenches. I belong to his regiment and know what I am talking about. Don't tremble like that, Madame Clarens; it is not in your family—"

"Almost; I feel it coming. Ah, the poor things! And Mademoiselle Marie! It will kill her, too."

At that moment Marie opened a window on the first floor. She had recognized the dragoon uniform and called out:

"Madame Clarens, aren't you talking to a soldier of my brother's regiment?"

But when the man heard that he ran off and joined the people whom he had left. When the poor discarded wife had to explain this flight she tried to lie, and in ordinary times she knew

how to do it. But her emotion had been too strong. Marie guessed what had happened, then insisted on knowing, and was soon convinced of it.

Two days later the rural guard brought to the farm, which was in deep mourning, a despatch which had arrived at the mayor's office, and announced the death of the captain—"dead on the field of honor."

When the first moments had passed, during which Marie feared that her father would die of grief, she took the pen with which she had so few days before written a sort of love-letter, such as only she could write, and rapidly wrote these words:

MONSIEUR,—Throw the letter which I wrote you into the fire and do not reply to it. Marie de Clairepée is no longer the young girl whom you knew, free to give herself. My brother has just been killed. My father, whose old age has been stricken in this way, has a right to count on my not leaving him. There is another who has rights over me which I cannot question; it is Hubert's son. He is now my child; I ought to, I will bring him up. I shall never separate myself from him. My future no longer belongs to me; it belongs to him. Good-by.

XII

THE ONE AT VILNA

JOSEPH EHRSAM had been campaigning for several months against the Russians in Lithuania. They were retiring slowly before Hindenburg's army, having been driven out of East Prussia, which they had overrun at first. The Government of Soulvaki had been invaded since the spring. They were fighting around the lakes, surrounded by forests of birches and pines which extend to the west of Vilna and which cut off Lithuania from so much sunshine. The struggle was savage and the pillage universal. Woe to the farms along the roads! The tall peasants with blue eyes, squeezed by the retreating Russian troops, saw the next day the German advance-guard coming. A hoarse command, ready rifles, a cocked revolver:

"Give me everything you have!"

"I have already given a lot to the Cossacks!"

"Give what is left to the conquerors of the Cossacks!"

They had to yield, to suffer from these strangers even more than from the Russians, and at last

to leave the house, emptied of its poor wealth. The Germans arrived at harvest-time in a country where there was food for men and animals, the first, the supreme aim of all the soldiers and most of the chiefs. They carried off the store of wheat, oats, and hay newly stored in the barns; they ran off the cattle, raided the poultry-yards, and uttered howls of delight as they took possession of the mills, the shops, the villages, and the tanneries of Chavli. Other army corps, entering Lithuania from the north and the southwest, advanced in the same way and, acting as a wedge toward the capital city, threatened to surround its defenders.

The country is so vast, however, the solitude is so profound around the cottages built on the high ground, that many families knew of the war only from the fugitives. Lines of carts went off on the roads and paths during the day, most of them toward the east, and each cart, covered with canvas or open to the wind, carried the weakest of the party, children, old folk, the sick, and also such furniture as they could carry off, and sacks of provisions—as much as the exhausted horse could pull. Barefooted men and women, looking before them at the indistinct road, the grass, and infrequent fields, the dead water of the swamps between the trunks of the birches, walked to right and left, thinking of what they were leaving. A number of women, without admitting their fatigue, carried devoutly before

them a framed picture of the Virgin which they leaned against their breasts and held with outstretched arms; and up to midday the sun looked down and saw the misery on the road, and hope which still remained. They said to one another:

"Where shall we go? Where shall we stop with our little children?"

Some reached Vilna, which they thought well protected by the Russian army; others tried to reach Minsk, or even distant Smolensk, outside of their own country; but a great number, following the example of their fathers and led by the sacred love for the trees which had witnessed former flights, filled with respect and sure of not being followed, made their way under the age-old arches, into the thickets, the moss-hags, the solitudes of the forest of Bialowicz, which has never been utilized by man, which was reserved for the hunts of the czars of Russia, the home of the wild and precious herd of aurochs. The plowmen unharnessed their horses and drew up the carts in a circle about the glades, and at night the flame and smoke of their fires could be seen rising above the ocean of leaves. Alas! They did not know that the horse and foot soldiers of Germany would drive them out of the forest of Bialowicz and that in the whole of Europe there was no more a refuge for them.

At Vilna there was great uneasiness. Every day since the beginning of September officers, soldiers, or fugitives would say to the inhabitants:

"Such a village has been occupied and burned by the Germans; such a river has been crossed; the barrier of the lakes has been forced by them; they are coming."

Still some of those who brought these sad reports stopped and, held by the need of shelter and food, and by the reassuring power of great human communities, strove to find a place among the people of all races and languages who were huddling together in the dwellings with gray tile or pointed slate roofs. Some of the well-to-do families had left the town, but others, ruled by a sense of honor, declared that they would not leave their houses or their neighbors in the hour of danger. The common folk continued to go about their business, to trade, to gossip on their front door-steps. The streets were more animated than usual. There were no more any Lithuanians or Poles or Jews, only unfortunates brought together by common suffering, and who spoke the common language of sighs and tears. The nearness of the danger excited a religious fervor. People took sides passionately for or against carrying away the Virgin of Ostra Brama and the bells of the churches. The statue of the Virgin, enriched with gold and precious stones, and celebrated throughout all Poland, honored by the orthodox as highly as by the Catholics, is placed in a glass gallery over the street called Ostrobramska, which was paved with wood, so that there might be the less noise about the sacred spot. When they

approach this bridge across the street, coachmen cause their horses to go more slowly; when they pass under the roof, men raise their hands to their hats or caps, and women cross themselves. Almost all raise their eyes for an instant to see through the great window the statue of the Virgin Mary and the candles which are always burning around her. At that moment the Virgin of Ostra Brama was marvelously surrounded by these little candle-flames because the danger had awakened the need for prayer. What was to become of the holy statue if the Germans entered the city? Characters, races, interests came into collision on this occasion as on so many others. The Russians would have liked to have the statue carried far away, placed in safety, while the Poles refused to be separated from their protecting Virgin, and all day long, and even during the nights, as full of life as the days, men and women in greater numbers than usual could be seen kneeling on the sidewalks or under the arcades in the street, praying, no doubt, but also guarding their treasure. The crowd was great, also, and animated in word and gesture about the churches—there were more than forty in the city—because the Russians had given orders that the bells should be taken away to Moscow. The Catholics especially rebelled against this profanation. It was in vain that the clergy preached obedience to the regulations of the military authorities. The people mounted guard below the bell-towers. The

men stayed there in threatening groups, the women came there to weep. Now and then, mingling their voices, they would sing parts of the litanies which Lithuania had sung for centuries on the Day of Sorrow, the "*Swiety Boze*," or the popular hymn to the Virgin, "*Boga Rodzies*." A few leagues from there the watchmen of the Russian army, among the reeds or in the trenches, counted with terror, at dawn, prints made by the horses' shoes on the soft mud.

Poor Vilna! It was the time of the year when the flax had nearly finished blooming. There were still long blue strips in the neighboring country. The meadows were green and deserted by the banks of the Vilia; then the thousand hills which compose the valley, some cultivated, the rest abandoned to pasturage and crowned by pines and birches, mingled their outlines to the extreme horizon, where the woods became the forest. The warmth of the air, in this month of September, and its clearness, recalled the most beautiful summers which this happy country had known. It was the time, too, when the rowan is brilliant along the wood roads.

On the 17th they learned that the Russians had been beaten near Lake Troky. Soon afterward an immense number of men, cannon, caissons, carts, automobiles, filled the streets of the town and flowed toward the east. During the passage of the army, whose retreat was protected by the chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, it became

almost impossible for the inhabitants to get out of their houses. The flood continued to pass during the whole night. That day Grand-Duke Nicholas made it known that the city would not be defended. Sure of taking possession of it, the enemy sought only to silence the batteries in the woods or to destroy the villas belonging to families which their spies had designated.

Toward evening on the 17th a young Polish woman, rosy and blond, in the costume of a Red Cross nurse, stood on the sidewalk on the left of the St. George Prospect near the bridge which unites this great street to the Faubourg of Zwierzyniec. The interminable procession of troops prevented her from going forward or backward, when an officer of the Guards, on horseback, closely pressed in this crowd, looking about him with eyes which did not see, as happens in extreme fatigue, suddenly saw this childhood friend, gave a sort of shudder, seemed to wake with a start, and then he really saw her and recognized her. He forced his horse forward through the three files of infantry which separated him from the sidewalk, and this simple movement, brutal and rapid, made an eddy about him. Some men swore, some one must have struck the horse, for he kicked twice and a soldier fell, who at first was trodden underfoot, rose, and went on limping. The current followed on again with its noise, its rolling of carts and caissons; the officer bowed; he was white with dust; drops of blood from a

wound on his temple had run down on his left cheek and drawn a red furrow which was lost in the collar of his uniform.

"It is you, Vladimir Domejko? What a place to meet!"

She laughed as she said this, but it was easy to see that her laughter triumphed over suffering—that of extreme fatigue, and the uneasiness which she felt at finding herself the prisoner of the crowd. Pointing to other officers who were ahead of him, the Pole held out his hand and said:

"Come. I will not let go of you. Walk beside my horse. I see that you are in trouble."

"Extremely in trouble. I can neither get back to the hospital nor go to a friend's house. I have been unable to move for two hours."

"You will dine with us; we are going to the Hotel Saint George. It will be a short meal and I shall have to excuse myself, madame; the enemy is at the gates of the town. Still, I hope that these accursed people will give us time to refresh ourselves and to drink your health."

Pushed, jostled, dragged along by the crowd, the officer and the young nurse advanced a few hundred meters to the long façade of the hotel. They made a pretty picture of antique war—the horseman and his prisoner. The tide carried them along. When they reached the hotel the officer forced his horse up to the sidewalk and dismounted. Others had gotten off their horses before him; one would have said that the officers

had made a rendezvous here—a rendezvous of rich and hungry men, in the midst of an army which was continuing its retreat.

In an instant the dining-room, with its walls wainscoted and decorated with Louis XVI motives, was filled. Officers of all ranks, most of them as white with dust as Domejko, with their gray uniforms stained or torn, sat down in groups at little tables, and they had hardly entered when the gipsy orchestra, the celebrated orchestra of the Hotel Saint George, whose first violin wept and raved at the same time in the days of peace, began to play as if it was simply a matter of amusing a number of young noblemen on a party of pleasure. Not a single day since the beginning of the war had the hotel been lacking in guests.

The waiters were ready to serve the dinner; one would have said that they had been waiting for this party of Guards, and perhaps, indeed, some one had been able to notify the proprietor. The nurse had suspected it when, having crossed the room, she saw a man of middle height, with a broad, rough face and curled mustache, upon whose passing the officers, even in this crowd and disorder, rose and saluted. It was the commandant of Vilna, Prince D——, a Caucasian by birth, who came and sat down at the table where the young woman was, and immediately said to her in French:

"We are too happy to have you with us, madame. I have given orders for the orchestra

to play, so that you may not hear the cannon too much."

And in fact, if the Germans had thought good not to bombard the town, they were firing at hills in the neighborhood. The noise of the explosions mingled with the strains of the violins. At a sign from the prince the musicians stopped the waltz which they had commenced, and every one rose. They played a Caucasian air which every one was soon singing with the instruments, "*Allah verdi Gospod sto boi.*" According to custom the head waiter had distributed to some of the guests those large glasses which each hold half a bottle of champagne, and which must be emptied to the bottom at a single draught when the prince should say:

"I propose the health of the colonel of the chasseurs à pied of the Guard"; or "I propose the health of his Excellency General Ivanovitch."

The officers sat down again, the conversation became more noisy, they ate the first course in haste. Night had fallen. From time to time one of the youngest officers would go out of the room for information on the Saint George Prospect, for they feared a surprise. As he went out for the third time they could hear the cries of the crowd outside. No one moved in the room; only some of them, foreseeing what was about to happen and not having satisfied their hunger, discarding all the social usages of which they were proud, took the pieces of bread which were

within reach of their hands and the fruit in the baskets. The watchman opened the door, and, without caring for rank, called out:

"Everybody out! The enemy is coming in the Pohulanka Faubourg."

The Caucasian prince drew out his pocketbook without haste, and, supposing that, naturally, nobody would think of paying for the dinner, went up to the head waiter, then held out three notes of a hundred rubles to the conductor of the gipsies, and the latter took them between two fingers without stopping playing.

The officers of the Guard found their horses in the avenue, which was scarcely lighted by a few lanterns. The flood of retreating troops continued to pass, overflowing the sidewalk. The officers mingled with it, were promptly separated from one another in the cool evening, unrecognized among the soldiers of the last regiments of the defense, rode up toward the old town, and saw in the blue shadow of the sky the two cupolas of the cathedral, around which there were so many stars. Soon the hills, the woods, the forests, separated the hostile armies. It was only much later that Prince D—— and his comrades learned that they had been made victims of a false alarm, spread on a night of panic, and that the Germans had only entered Vilna on the following day.

On the morning of the 18th of September when the sun rose all the soldiers and almost

all the wounded had left the city, which was waiting for the conqueror. There remained only the Cossacks, posted in groups of three or four at the ends of the streets by which the German were advancing. Leaning over the necks of their horses, with their Astrakhan caps advanced, as soon as they had seen the German skirmishers between the painted façades of the Pohulanka quarter, they turned and cantered off through the Antokol Street, by which the defenders of the town had retired.

At half past ten o'clock a Prussian officer, with revolver in hand, buttoned up in his gray-green uniform, almost as correctly dressed as though he were coming out of his room for parade, opened in his turn the door of the famous restaurant of the Hotel Saint George. The servants, who were of all nationalities, had not taken flight; they waited, still in livery, behind the half-open doors of the service corridors, and one of them came immediately at the call of the German, who cried out for "Champagne!" But the officer, seeing on the chairs belts, field-glasses, and papers forgotten by the Russian Guard, had the reason of this disorder explained, frowned, and said:

"Clear it away first, and tell the proprietor to come here."

Some one came who represented himself as such, and spoke to the officer in German. The latter must have known the country marvelously well, for he chose without suggestion the some-

what distant spot where the staff of his division would have supper that evening, answered the employee's objections, said that he would place several motor-trucks at the service of the waiters, who would all be well treated and well paid, and finally said:

"You say that they are still firing on the hill where Ponary is situated?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"I will give orders for our batteries to stop firing; there is no need of hastening the flight of your army."

The man who was speaking was a Prussian from the shores of the Baltic, an infantry lieutenant commanding a company. He was tall, thin, with a flat and bloodless face, broad at the cheek-bones, a yellow complexion, deep-set eyes, pointed upward a little toward the temples, so that the soldiers, catching the distant likeness, had nicknamed him "the big Lapp." But if one looked at him attentively one would remark the intelligence, the extraordinary energy, in these gray-blue eyes, whose eyelids were often pinched by a nervous contraction. He was named Otto Gervasius and was one of the fiercest young men of war who had recently come out of the Academy in Berlin. No one knew so well as he the regulations, the men, the chiefs, the theories of attack and defense for infantry, the arm in which he served, and also the latest German inventions concerning artillery or the art of

field fortification. His mind was never at rest. He lived only for war. Gervasius never admitted that he was tired. His hatred of everything Latin would have made him celebrated if he had not had, in the first place, the reputation of a capable, trustworthy officer, ready for anything, sure of a great future in the German army. He was never seen to laugh except in battle. Although his bearing was scrupulously correct with his comrades, and he never refused to take part in the suppers, the drinking-bouts, the masquerades, even in the pillaging expeditions got up by the German youth, one felt, from his stiffness, from the immobility of his face, on which no sign of interest, of pleasure, even of anger indicated the hidden workings of the mind, that Lieutenant Gervasius had a different idea of war from the greater part of the officers of his regiment, that it was his only thought and his life.

Besides, he was a man of whom wine never got the better. His faults as well as his abilities making him a terror to the timid, he had gained an extraordinary ascendancy over General von Salzmann, who commanded the division, and over the chief of staff, von Limburg, so that he was often charged with confidential missions. He was fulfilling one of these missions now in preparing the supper which was to take place at eight o'clock. The general had simply said:

"We are conquerors and we are tired out,

two reasons why it should be very good, you understand, Gervasius—very good!"

When he had given his orders Gervasius left the hotel. The Saint George Prospect was crowded now with German soldiers and Red Cross trucks, bringing in the wounded.

Toward half past seven, in a park at the top of a hill some ten kilometers from the capital, the subaltern and some of the superior officers of the staff, part of whom had come in automobiles and part on horseback, were walking about and talking while waiting for the arrival of the general. Some, in spite of the lateness of the hour, were going over the Ponary Villa, and looking at the austere landscape which stretches toward the southeast, a long, narrow plain with a lake of the same shape in the middle, which is surrounded first by reeds, then by meadows, then by forests of green trees. The daylight which still remained high up in the sky left all their grandeur to the outlines of the landscape, and made the lake, over which flocks of wild birds were circling, shine like a sapphire surrounded by dark emeralds.

Ponary, built in the reign of Sigismund Augustus, was a long villa composed of a main building flanked by two wings, the whole being sheltered under roofs of sheet-iron painted green, and projecting far over the walls. In the course of time it had changed masters several times, and this manorial dwelling, which was once richly

furnished, was little more, at the beginning of the twentieth century, than a house barely kept up, in which there survived some vestiges of its former estate. Handsome hangings of the eighteenth century, some old portraits, trophies of arms, hung from the walls in the reception-rooms, and on the second story was still to be seen a zoölogical museum which recalled the time when M. de Buffon was teaching natural history to the whole of Europe. As the Russians had established a battery back of Ponary, on the other side of the hill, the villa was exposed to the replies of the German artillery. That very morning it had been struck by several projectiles which had destroyed the left wing and the greenhouses behind it. The rest had been saved only by an order given at eleven o'clock to the commandant of the enemy's artillery.

It is there that his Excellency Lieutenant-General von Salzmann had decided to dine that evening with the officers of the staff of his division.

Otto Gervasius had had the table set in the large reception-room on the ground floor. He had been there since three o'clock in the afternoon, looking after the smallest details, that the feast might be worthy of the guests and of the victory which they wished to celebrate. The four windows of this room were already lighted. At the summit of the wooded hill, this ruined wing of a pleasure-house, the ruins of which were still smoking, this other wing in which the soldiers

and servants were preparing a banquet, finally outside on the lawn, on the walks, these officers of the victorious army awaiting their chief, made a cruel picture. But the men who made it were not of those who think about the quality of their pleasure. As the hour for dinner had arrived they came together. At precisely eight o'clock they saw a closed automobile coming, which moved rapidly in spite of the steepness of the hill. Facing the entrance door, which was protected by a projecting roof, the officers had taken the regulation attitude in the approaching twilight. His Excellency got out of his automobile, preceded by his chief of staff and his two aides, Lieutenant Gothein and Sub-Lieutenant von Barnekow. The general was a man of middle height, with extravagantly wide shoulders, from which arose, without visible support, a square face, of a uniform red, but twice barred by lines of white hair; above, by two bushy eyebrows, as glaring as the feathers around the eyes of a sea-eagle, and below by two stiff mustaches, cut short. He had the voice of a hoarse organ.

"Well," he cried, "the appetite?"

There was no reply, but the heads bowed.

"Is it ready?" he went on. "Where is Gervasius?"

The infantry commander of the division, Colonel von Lobwitz, stepped forward and said:

"Excellency, he is in the kitchen."

"Very good."

The chief glanced at the avenues, the fields, the thickets, then at a sky of magnificent clearness, in which the first stars were lighting themselves at the last rays of daylight.

"Not bad!" said he. "Besides, the view of a conquest is always pleasant. Let us go to dinner."

The table was covered with all the silverware which they had been able to discover by breaking the doors of the sideboards and wardrobes of the villa; they had loaded it with the candelabra taken from the drawing-rooms and bedrooms. The greenhouses had supplied leaves and flowers. Some of the servants of the domain, discovered in the servants' quarters, where they had hidden, stood behind the guests' chairs. Part of them had put on the blue livery embroidered on the collar with a white eagle. German infantry soldiers helped in the service. The places had been arranged in due order by Gervasius, who had placed the general at the end of the table, under a rather poor portrait of John Sobieski, wrapped in an aureole of Polish flags. A hundred candles lighted the table, others burned in consoles around the room, and their light was reflected in the hangings of yellow satin which covered the walls. Before each guest were seven glasses of Bohemian ware.

During the first hour they talked but little, they ate; and in truth all these men had for not exerting themselves in conversation the excuse

that they were tired out from fighting four days and three nights. But when they drank the first glass of a Bordeaux betrayed by the former butler of Ponary, and brought out of a hiding-place at the back of the wine-cellar, the conversation began between neighbors, stiff and abrupt at first. They told about the last engagements in the suburbs the day before—how they had forced the enemy to break here and there, and the exploits of regiments and comrades. Sometimes, catching a name which one of the officers had spoken, old Salzmann would frown with his white brows and say:

"Poor So-and-so! Poor So-and-so!"

Except for him, the guests spoke low. The habit of discipline, the feeling of caste, made them hold themselves stiffly under the eyes of the chiefs, and continue to pass a never-ending examination. They were still on duty, under orders: the chief-of-staff von Limburg; the Colonel von Lobwitz, the commandant of the infantry of the division; Major Kraemer, commanding the artillery; the officers of less importance; the captain in command of General Headquarters; the very elegant captain of cavalry, von Wartenberg; the reserve telephone-lieutenant, Michaelis; the divisional surgeon, Pöstchke; the veterinary, Roth; the reserve lieutenant, Furrer, in charge of the poisonous-gas service; the mobilized judge who had become a counselor of the war council; the gendarme officer, and especially all

those who affected the most ease of manner and knowledge of the world—they were all secretly controlled by the desire of promotion.

Only by half past ten o'clock did they begin to lose the notion of time, of the war, of what one should say and what not say, and it could be clearly seen when the general, whose eyes had become very moist, smote the table a blow which made the silver service tremble, and cried:

"War is a fine thing, isn't it?"

"Holy," replied the chief of staff.

His adjutant, Captain Brücker, who always agreed with him, said, from the other end of the table:

"No, not holy; desirable would be better. Look!"

With red face and a vacant eye, he raised his arms and with a circular gesture took in the yellow hangings, the portrait of Sobieski, the flags, the furniture, everything which belonged to somebody else.

"Very good! Captain Brücker, desirable is the word. We must drink Brücker's health!"

As he spoke, the general struck with the blade of his knife one after another the seven Bohemian glasses ranged before him and which each gave a different sound.

"Listen, waiters, they are complaining! Give some wine to these German heroes. There is some in the cellars. There must be some! If not, I will send Lieutenant Gervasius to stir you up; he is not tender."

"Bravo, Excellency!" replied those of high rank.

The lieutenant, who was the only one who was in full possession of his senses among the guests, did not appear to be in the least concerned at hearing his name pronounced, and continued to talk in a low voice with one of the soldiers who were waiting on the table.

"Here, you, why don't you answer?"

The noisy conversation stopped. The lieutenant, stiff, with expressionless face, replied in a calm and precise voice which produced an extraordinary effect in this room, still vibrating with the utterance of tongues thick with wine:

"I have just been informed, Excellency, that one of my non-commissioned officers wishes to speak to me. That is all. I was asking whether it was a pressing and serious matter."

"You are too stupid, Gervasius. But have him come in. You are not going to leave the table for a non-commissioned officer, I suppose?"

"Very good, Excellency."

Attention was now drawn to the end of the room, to the door behind Gervasius, through which the men serving the table came and went. A non-commissioned officer raised the curtain and entered the room. He had a rosy face, was very blond, and was dazzled by so much light; after looking about the table for a moment, he went toward Lieutenant Gervasius, who had turned round.

"An Alsatian!" said Lieutenant Brücker, aloud. "I do not like to see those people at a feast."

The aide, Gothein, emphasized the insult:

"I do not like them any better in battle; they are not trustworthy."

The antiphon was taken up by several others, who, leaning toward their neighbor, and imagining that they would be heard only by him, but who, unable to control their throats and to measure their voices, said, some with a coarse laugh, others gritting their teeth:

"An inferior German race."

"Unassimilated."

"Worse than that—unworthy of our great Germany, and of the honor we have done them in accepting them among us."

"Oh, my dear fellow! Accepted? We forced them, and we should do well to continue to force this people which has not yet understood, no, has not understood—"

Still, most of them were listening to hear what the non-commissioned officer would say.

"Excellency, this is the non-commissioned officer, Ehrsam, a manufacturer at Masmunster, and who will soon be a Fähnrich, I think."

Joseph Ehrsam did not move, but he turned still more red.

"Non-commissioned-officer Ehrsam," said the lieutenant, aloud, "you say that the company has discovered and surrounded an officer and thirty Russian soldiers hidden in the baker's house and

that Sub-Lieutenant von Plau does not know what to do with them? Is that it?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"Because the prisons are full, the schools are full, the churches also?"

"Well," interrupted the general, "there are fields in the neighborhood, it seems to me."

He made the motion of bringing a gun to the shoulder, and the room was filled with laughter. Some servants in livery—of those who had served the former master, also laughed behind their napkins,

Gervasius did not laugh. He felt that he was being secretly judged, and with honor, by those around him.

"Tell me, have they been searched and disarmed?"

"I did it myself, Lieutenant."

"Have you a room four meters by five in your bakery?"

"Yes, the room back of the salesroom."

"Put your thirty men in there."

"And the officer."

"Have him kept under watch, nearby. And wait for me. Go back to the city."

"Not yet!" said the general.

He had heard the expressions of distrust and menace addressed by his officers to the Alsace-Lorrainers, and, the wine helping, the idea had come to him to give a lesson in patriotism to this second-rate German, this "*Wacke*," as he loved to call them, whom chance had sent to

him at the moment of victory. In his brain, where a certain number of pretentious formulas in honor of the Fatherland lived ticketed, as though in a clothing-shop, beside the principles of the military college, the project needed a pause of a few seconds in order to be properly carried out. The silence was complete. The servants slipped along rather than walked. His Excellency's look was fixed. He was careful to make every one wait for a moment.

"Glory to Germany!" said he, in a loud voice. "This thought comes from our Tannenberg: 'The German people is always right, because it is the German people, and numbers eighty millions of subjects.'"

Murmurs of approbation arose around the table. They were louder than was quite seemly at the end, near Gervasius, where the younger officers sat. The gendarme officer, a little more excited than the others, cried:

"Hoch! for his Excellency General von Salzmann! Tannenberg spoke truly!"

The commandant of artillery, Major Kraemer, had the boldness to imitate the chief. He leaned his hands on the table, raised himself half a foot, and said, solemnly:

"'Germany is the future of the human race.' This was said by Monsieur Lehmann."

The general having tolerated this speech, the chief of staff, throwing himself back in his chair, said in his turn:

"A single one of our German warriors, of whom, unfortunately, a great number are now falling, has an intellectual and moral value superior to that of hundreds of those coarse and primitive men whom England, France, and Russia are opposing to us."

"I," said the sharp voice of the reserve lieutenant, Michaelis, an engineer with many degrees, "*akademisch gebildet*," "I will quote our Kaiser."

At this word they all rose, some with difficulty, not quite knowing whether it was obligatory, but to imitate the general, who had been the first to rise at the name of the Emperor. Some of them looked enviously at Michaelis because he had had the happy, the great idea.

"What did our Kaiser say? For he has spoken a number of times," asked Colonel von Lobwitz, who was not lacking in a certain amount of irony. But to look at him, stiff, serious, looking straight before him, every one was convinced that the question was dictated by respect and curiosity. And young Michaelis, reassured, said, accompanying the phrase with a gesture of his right hand:

"'An art which passes the limits and the laws which I have fixed is no longer an art.'"

"How true that is! How beautiful! Hoch!" replied some of the diners.

They all sat down again with dignity, and Lieutenant Gothein could be heard struggling with this noble thought of H. S. Chamberlain, the man who went over to Germany:

"The German army, in which I include the navy, of course, is the most important institution of moral education in the world."

Von Salzmann went on: "That is what I call a corps of officers! All of us here understand that Germany is the king among peoples, and that all others, all those which are not of the pure race, are made to admire and to serve it."

"That is pretty much what the catechism says in explaining our duty toward God," murmured Michaelis in a corner. "Only, it adds 'to love Him', and we do not say that."

His Excellency's square face had become purple. Although he did not hear the reflection of the telephone lieutenant, he raised his hard eyes toward the ceiling and tried to laugh, nobody ever knew why. Then, as though recalled to the realities of life, he looked at each of the guests ranged about the table, one after the other. They awaited the words which he would say. He said:

"I want to drink another glass of Kaisersekt."

The non-commissioned officer in command of the table service leaned forward, "It is ready, Excellency; it is ready."

Ten servants then came in, carrying bottles of champagne brought from Germany in the army trucks. Nobody paid any attention to Joseph Ehrsam, who, three paces behind the guests, was listening without moving, not having left the position of attention. Gervasius finally remem-

bered the presence of the non-commissioned officer.

"Very good. You can go, and wait for me, as I told you."

"At what time shall I expect you, sir?"

"A little before dawn."

After that there was no more restraint in the drinking, in the remarks, in the noise. These men, gorged with food and wine, talked vaguely, and slopped over in threats or maudlin endearments. Toasts followed from guest to guest, impromptu, entirely in gestures, according to the custom. The non-commissioned officer in charge of the waiters, bearing a message from one of the officers, would go around the table, lean forward, and murmur in the ear of another officer, "Captain Brücker, Rittmeister von Wartenberg drinks to your health," or "Divisional-Surgeon Pötschke, the Divisional-Veterinary Roth drinks to your health." At once, as if replying to a challenge, and as promptly as possible, Captain Brücker or Surgeon Pötschke would rise, stand at attention, turn toward the comrade whose name had been told to him, would hold out his full glass, would drink, would hold it out again, empty, and would sit down.

This German rite was followed a dozen times. Then Lieutenant Gothein, with great applause, proposed to make a punch such as the best restaurants of Berlin had never served to their customers, to bring such a good supper to a

proper end. A huge silver punch-bowl was brought and placed before him, as well as a number of bottles of different shapes, a large pitcher full of very pale and foaming liquid, pieces of ice, a sugar-bowl, and two juicy red pineapples with a strong odor, which came from the ruined greenhouses of Ponary.

"I will begin by informing you that through the high intervention of his Excellency a keg of white beer has been sent us from Berlin."

"Hoch for his Excellency! Hoch for the white beer!"

"I will first lay the bed of the punch," said the aide.

Saying this, he cut the pineapples with remarkable skill, taking out the tough heart and leaving only the full cells. He poured on the pineapples a pound of powdered sugar, then the white beer, two bottles of champagne, a bottle of raspberry syrup, a bottle of cognac, and set afloat in this frightful-looking bath transparent pieces of ice from the Vilia. The punch was made. They left it to get cold. The round eyes, the little, hard eyes, the crafty eyes, between heavy lids, the diagonal eyes, slanting toward the temples, all eyes coveted it. In this concupiscence and this admiration the idea of German superiority was still present. What other army could have made such a punch at such a distance from the capital? What other government, inspired by the genius of the race, would have bought the

favorite beer, to send it with the cannon and the bad flour? What other chief than an authentic German would have thought of employing so many soldiers, the very morning of his entrance into a conquered city, in preparing a supper afar off, on the hills, and what other would have found so ingeniously and broken open so resolutely the walled-up hiding-places of the escaping masters of a well-supplied estate?

The perfect warriors of Germany, in the fumes of the wines, blessed Germany for the new beverage.

It was served with a punch-spoon, and they drank it, some bending over their glasses and sucking it up in little mouthfuls, others throwing their heads back and swallowing at a gulp a mixture whose component parts, juxtaposed rather than mingled, irritated and soothed their palates by turns. Otto Gervasius alone, still erect on his chair, drank without haste and without apparent pleasure, and continued to talk to a neighbor, who was not listening to him, about a maneuver which they had made before the very strong position of Ovile. He soon stopped talking, and while the guests, who had, as they said, "been hit on the head with a club," laughed, called to one another again, began to go to sleep, or got up, staggering, he watched with the most perfect contempt these men who had been conquered by wine, brandy, heat, and pride.

At half past eleven General von Salzmann

went out heavily without a word of farewell, followed by his two aides and the chief of staff. Gervasius met him at the door of the room, asked for orders, was perhaps understood, received an affirmative growl in reply, and came back and sat down a little apart. The other officers had remained at table. Toward midnight, three of them, the highest in rank, were asleep, with their elbows on the cloth; another, the youngest, with his head on the back of his chair and his mouth open, was snoring. Two lieutenants, who had gone out half an hour before, appeared in the opening of the door, pushing by the shoulders two servant-maids whom they had discovered in some corner of the château. Frightened and amused, resisting and laughing, they were half enveloped in the falling folds of the green portière, and their frightened eyes, lighted to the bottom by the light of the candles, shone like the eyes of two young wolves.

Gervasius thought that the moment had come to end the supper, for he had something better to do than to watch his comrades roll under the table, get into a quarrel, or run about the place after servant-maids. He rose and said:

"His Excellency orders the officers to retire. The automobiles are at the door."

It was true; the automobiles were drawn up before the villa. The servants, with the help of the chauffeurs, carried out some officers who had entirely lost consciousness.

When the lieutenant had seen the last automobile disappear at the turning of the avenue, he came back to the dining-room, grumbling:

"It is disgusting! They get drunk for so little! If it were not for me, who would attend to matters?"

He had become again in an instant the imperious and terrible master who was not prodigal of words, but who, when he had spoken them, never took one back.

The servants were at table in their turn in the huge kitchen. He called them.

"Take off the white eagle. It is the black eagle which commands now! No livery; everybody in working-clothes. The villa must be emptied in two hours. You, old Piotr Burlingis, you will show where the last hiding-places are and you will give me the keys; if not—you understand?"

The action was expressive, and the old coachman had no trouble in understanding that he would be shot. He was dignified, did not answer, and went to work wiping two tears from the corners of his eyes. It was the last act of thirty years of peaceful times and fatherly rule that he had lived at Ponary. They brought all the boxes found in the garrets or cellars into the hall of fêtes. At the moment the workers began to pile on the floor and around the table, pell-mell, silverware, tapestry, candelabra, damask linen, sacks of wheat and oats, boxes of bottles of wine, and

some vases of Japanese porcelain in a rattan basket, miniatures, a set of gold chessmen (the gift of a king of Poland to the grandfather of the owner of the estate), the astonished servants saw a detachment of infantry come into the room, commanded by a *Feldwebel*.

Everything had been provided for. Gaping about, snickering, saying nothing because they had seen Gervasius, the soldiers picked up the cases and carried them off to the motor-trucks which the lieutenant had ordered for one o'clock in the morning. The people living on the plain who looked that night in the direction of the villa must have been surprised to see so many windows lighted up. They searched from cellar to attic. An intelligent method led the pillagers to every floor, and into the very roofs, because of the treasures which Gervasius hoped to find there, and which he did not find. The man with the Lapp's face was in rapture. This was his orgy; he collected the booty, not for personal profit, without even a thorough knowledge of the value of the things he was pillaging; but the thought of the great Germany was in his mind, and it was to her that he silently made offering of each piece of this war treasure.

"To you, Allemania, the damask linen of exceptional fineness, the pride of the Polish lords; to you the pieces of cloth preserved in the wardrobes, of which the trusted servant, the '*ô maîtresse*,' had control and guard; to you the barrels

of brandy, the smoked hams, the sacks of oats and onions and all the rest, all that made the sixty men of the detail sweat."

A little before three o'clock in the morning—one could already divine a rosy flush in the night on the horizon, toward the east—Lieutenant Gervasius, accompanied by six men, went down the avenue, to a group of aged beech-trees, beneath which the night was doubly dark.

"This way, Lieutenant, to the clearing—here is the call-button and the listening-piece."

A telephone corporal had found the wire which he had placed some hours before in the lower branches of one of the beeches. Gervasius called; he asked:

"Give me the F observatory."

"You have it."

"First-Lieutenant Gervasius, orders of his Excellency General von Salzmann. In ten minutes let a squall of shells, some of them incendiary, fall on Ponary Villa."

"I understand, Lieutenant."

The automobiles, loaded with the booty taken from the château, were not yet at the bottom of the hill, and the first were only beginning to get on the plain, when a short, furious cannonade shook the forest, then in rapid waves the neighboring hills, all the way to Vilna. The hilltop on which the villa was built appeared to be wholly enveloped in the blazing fury of the explosions, the woods, the lawns, the white walls, the roofs;

then nothing was to be seen but fragments of wall, shapeless, no longer with the form of a human habitation, which had crumbled amid a whirlwind of flames, dust, and smoke.

Nobody knows whether the servants of the villa, and all the working-people scattered through the outbuildings, had been warned.

On Monday, September 20th, the reports from the chiefs of the different units occupying Vilna and the environs could say truthfully:

"All resistance has ended, the shops are open, the troops are resting."

The soldiers had received permission to pass beyond the posts guarding the suburbs of the town on condition of not going more than four kilometers, so on the following Sunday some thirty soldiers of the German infantry were assembled, sitting on the thick moss, in a wood of pines and maples, which ran down to the river and from which the blackened ruins of Ponary could be seen in the distance. Contrary to what usually happens when young men are freed in this way from military discipline, one heard no shouts, nor even any word uttered in a loud voice; still, they were talking animatedly as they played cards, broken up into groups of four. They seemed much more attentive to their conversation than to the game which they were playing. If any one could, without being seen, have slipped among them, he would have at once observed that they were speaking the Alsatian

dialect; all the faces were Alsatian, and a certain exuberance of gesture and of words would have betrayed the common origin, the Celtic origin of these young men assembled in a Lithuanian wood, in the course of the most extraordinary war which the world has ever seen. Frequently one or another of them would look carefully down the paths by which any one could come. In the central group the non-commissioned officer, Joseph Ehrsam, was the one who was most listened to and to whom most replies were addressed. He was on his feet, and he also frequently looked into the depths of the wood between the trees, or the road below, along the Vilia.

"Well," said one of the youngest, "you are sure that we shall not remain here?"

"Sure. I cannot tell you how I know it, but I do know it. I do not know where on the western front we are going, but there is no question about it; they are going to make us fight against the French and the English."

"It is all one to me," said one of the players, already growing gray about the temples, "whether I fight against the English, but as for fighting against the old country, I will not do it."

The first to reply was not more than twenty; he was small, dry, dark, fiery as a Frenchman.

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

"Nor I!"

They drew together, and formed only a single

group, in truth, on the mossy decline, and as they were not playing seriously, but only to appear to be doing something and mislead spies, several forgot to hold their cards in their hands and let them fall. The eyes, the determined faces of these lads from Alsace were turned toward Ehrsam, who was on the watch, leaning against the trunk of a tree. Their hatred of Germany was unloosed. Suddenly, because he had spoken the first of all, a big weaver of Mulhouse, who was always laughing, struck the palm of his hand against the trunk of a tree and said:

"I have had letters from home; they are tyrants, these Schwobs; they are condemning our people to prison, to worse yet, because their pretty manners have not fascinated us."

Then one could see that his pleasant face had become ugly. And rejoinders came quickly; hands were raised to applaud discreetly; the murmur of voices rose among the trees.

"I have had letters, too. Do you know that Lucien Guismann, the tailor of Strasbourg, was sent to prison for six weeks for raising his hat to a detachment of French prisoners? The judge had the impudence to add, in the sentence, 'Taking his great age into consideration.'"

"Great age? Much they care for that! Pastor Gérold of Strasbourg got a month of prison for having given money to French wounded, and the same thing happened to Abbé Kaspar of Netzwiller, and the school-teacher of Soufflenheim,

who had made his pupils cry 'Hoch!' in honor of the French army.

"Fifteen months for Michael Sittler, an artist of Colmar. Guess what! Making statuettes of Napoleon First."

"It reminded them of Jena!"

"And more yet, my boy! I know some of the victims of their councils of war, too. Madame Malmont of Noveant got a fine of five thousand marks and six months of prison for having circulated a French newspaper in Alsace. Five little boys of my village got a year in prison—Crovisier, Caquelin, Chiavazzo, Couedera, Poirot—who belong to Rothan, because when they heard the German soldiers sing '*Deutschland über alles*' they went into the inn and sang the 'Marseillaise.' Five years of hard labor for Sister Valentine of Riedesheim for having 'favored the French wounded at the expense of the German wounded,' when she had done nothing at all except to declare herself a Frenchwoman to those whom she was taking care of. I could tell you of twenty other sentences of innkeepers, laborers, locksmiths, masons—"

"I believe you! Their councils of war have already given out three thousand years of prison in Alsace!"

"But the finest of their sentences was the one which they pronounced last July on two young girls, Jeanne Gros and Eugénie Proly."

"Ah, ah, tell us about that!"

"They threw kisses to some French prisoners

who were passing in the streets at Colmar. The Schwobs condemned each of them to a month in prison 'for illicit approach to the enemy.'"

They were still laughing when Joseph Ehrsam recalled his comrades to prudence with a gesture, and said:

"The meeting to-day is to consider what we shall do when we get on the western front."

"If they will place in line an army corps composed entirely of Alsatians," said one of the younger men, "they will see something which they have not seen before."

"They have been careful to send us against the Russians; they do not trust us."

"When I think," said another, "that I waited for the French at Masevaux till eight o'clock on the seventh of August, nineteen fourteen, when the train started, and that if they had arrived only two hours earlier, boys, we should all be fighting on the side on which our hearts are!"

Another hummed:

"¡When that time comes
I do not know whether there will be snow on the pines
Or the raspberry will be ripe—"

"Don't sing," said Ehrsam. "Be still! We are already too likely to be suspected, gathered like this in a wood, and all Alsatians. No, what is certain is this: we are going to France, and we cannot kill Frenchmen."

Voices all around him repeated, "We cannot!"

"Then what can we do?"

"What others have done before; when we are in the battle-line we will always fire too high."

"Still, we cannot aim high when the rest do not."

"Certainly, but we aim above the object, and the lead passes by in the air—"

He was going to say something more when, having looked on the other side of the river, to the right, and below, he took the arm of one of his comrades whom he compelled to rise, and said to the others:

"Move about a bit, all of you! Pretend to play! We are being watched!"

He immediately left the group and began to walk up and down among the trees with the companion whose arm he had taken; several others scattered about in the wood and began to throw stones into the pines, as though they were hunting squirrels, and to cut switches; others raised two fingers in the air, holding cards; three or four stretched themselves out on their backs and pretended to sleep. It was not three minutes before an officer appeared, coming up the hill, with a switch in his hand. He did not look at the Alsatians, but came straight toward them. Ehrsam had recognized him by his figure, his decided bearing, perhaps by the instinctive fear which he had felt when he saw the officer's figure below, a long way off, beside the Vilia.

It was he, as he came back in walking up and

down, near where the moss was trampled, to whom Gervasius spoke, and truly the lieutenant was in a good humor, like the weather; there was a sort of contentment on the yellow face with drawn features, of him whom the soldiers watched secretly, uneasy for Ehrsam.

"A nice walk, Ehrsam? Nobody can say that the chiefs are not careful of the health of their soldiers. You have not seen any Cossacks, I suppose?"

The air of satisfaction which Ehrsam had observed had already disappeared. Haughty and reserved, with his chin raised, his eyelids half closed, the officer examined and counted the men scattered through the wood, then, bruskly, making a sign to the non-commissioned officer to come with him, said:

"Come this way!"

They went down to the meadows beside the river, and took the road to Vilna.

"If I were not as sure of you as I am, Ehrsam, I should be surprised at this reunion of Alsatians in the woods. For I counted; I know all their names; there is not a German up there."

Joseph Ehrsam had a gift of dissimulation which his brother Pierre did not at all possess. Thanks to it, he had got out of several unpleasant situations during this year spent among the German soldiers. He pretended not to understand, and began to laugh, looking before him at the roofs and towers of the town.

"Ah, Lieutenant, they are real children; they like to go about in bands, to play, and to talk or sing in our dialect, which is certainly not a masterpiece of German elegance, but which does them good in passing over their gullets, like a good glass of beer, you know, that white beer which scrapes your throat—I think the officers were drinking it the other evening."

"Yes, yes," said Gervasius, "but we have forgotten all that. The cannon has wiped it out. But you did not understand very well what I meant, Ehrsam. I meant to say that any one else but myself, who know you, might have wondered whether, in view of the clannish and wrong-headed character of your compatriots, they might not be plotting something. That has happened; I have heard that several generals have already drawn up severe orders on that point, and directed that an Alsatian soldier shall always be accompanied on any errand by a German soldier of authentic race."

"But, Lieutenant, Germany has always considered us as belonging to the authentic race, since she claimed us as Germans in 1871."

"Certainly. I mean of a race entirely loyal. But what were you doing? For I saw you in a circle. Then you made your neighbor get up, and all the others went off."

"Poor children! I said 'good evening' to them. Some of them did not hear me; they were asleep, as you may have seen, since they had

not waked up. All these victories have fatigued them."

"Perhaps they have not got entirely rid of that mutinous spirit which all the good offices of Germany have not been able to correct, and I was saying to myself that thirty Alsatians together —thirty-one with you—might very well not form a concert which would sing the praises of the German Fatherland. Am I wrong?"

Ehrsam, entirely master of himself, turned his head, and the soldier and his officer looked squarely into the depths of each other's eyes. Gervasius, abandoning all pretense, had resumed that threatening face, that point-blank manner of questioning, of staring, and of frightening the adversary, which had caused him to be so dreaded by the men and by his comrades themselves. He whipped the air two or three times with the switch which he held in his hand, and, without taking his eyes from Ehrsam, who stood the ordeal perfectly, he continued as he walked on:

"I intend to punish traitors, you know that, and if there are ever any in the company which I have the honor to command, accounts will be settled quickly, Ehrsam, and harshly."

The Alsatian replied, as he looked at the town again, and in the most tranquil tone, "You must be sure, Lieutenant, that so long as I, a non-commissioned officer, was there, nothing could happen but what was usual and proper."

Gervasius shrugged his shoulders, evidently

annoyed to find in Ehrsam a subtler mind than his own.

"In any case, I prefer excursions in which all the elements of great Germany are represented, and I say this once for all. It is an opportunity for me to repeat to you, Ehrsam, that you ought to give a proof of that loyalty which no one of my comrades doubts, any more than I do, but which will be more valuable when it has been solemnly affirmed."

"What do you mean, Lieutenant?"

Gervasius stopped.

"For you to become an officer. You have refused till now. Many officers are being killed, and men like you, men of superior education, rich, accustomed to handle men in manufacturing, are clearly designated to take their places."

The Alsatian replied, with an evasive gesture of his hand, "I have no ambition."

"It is not a question of ambition; it is a question of duty. You served as a volunteer. You belong to a good family. You owe it to yourself and you owe it to us to become an officer. It would be more agreeable for you."

"Yes."

"The associations would suit you better than those which you have every day."

"What do you expect, Lieutenant? We Alsatians are a humble race, contented with little."

Gervasius tried once more, by looking into Joseph Ehrsam's eyes, to see whether he was not

speaking ironically. He felt a slight doubt. But the Alsatian's dull eyes expressed only a deferential attention, without a ray, without a shadow of a thought. The lieutenant, before finishing the trial and resuming his walk, frowned, twisted that slack, thick, wrinkled mouth, above which bristled a few hairs like a cat's.

"There is no use in evasion, Ehrsam. I want you to be an officer in the service of the Emperor."

"Very good, I will be one."

"Ah, that pleases me! I am enchanted, Ehrsam, really enchanted. I will repeat your promise to my comrades. I thought that one day or another your obstinacy would cease."

An automobile was coming rapidly. Gervasius, not wishing a superior officer, perhaps a general, to see him talking to a simple non-commissioned officer, made several steps in advance, saluted when the automobile passed, then waited till Joseph caught up with him. He did this as a perfectly natural thing, which he did not need to explain.

"We are going back to the west with the division," he went on, "but we shall not be sent to the front for several weeks, I presume. You will have time to take the course. We will send you to Hanover, and you will become *Fähnrich*."

The promenade was soon over. The officer pretended that he had to visit a post in the country near by, before he got to the suburb, and took a crossroad. As they parted, and for the

first time in his life, he held out his hand to the Alsatian.

"What sort of a trap has he set for me?" thought Ehrsam, when he found himself alone at the entrance of Antokol Street.

"Whether aspirant or sub-lieutenant, I shall be nearer to him, subjected to a more narrow oversight, a more certain victim, for he hates me with all the hatred of his people for my race. He has undertaken to ruin me If any one of the thirty men who was with me just now in the forest were to make up his mind to sell me, I should be very sure never to make the acquaintance of the aspirants' school at Hanover."

But no witness told what had happened.

XIII

THE STATUES OF THE KINGS

TWO months and a half later Joseph Ehrsam was indeed on the French front, opposite Rheims. He was *Fähnrich* in the German army. His uniform had not changed, but on the handle of his saber-bayonet he wore the sword-knot.

Two days after his arrival in the Cernay sector, before daybreak, he was finishing the inspection of the trenches which his captain, Otto Gervasius, had directed him to make.

The German batteries established to the east of Rheims, beyond Cernay, on the heights of Vitry, of Berru, of Nogent l'Abbesse, were firing regularly, without haste, and the shells were falling in the Ceres suburb, from which rose columns of black smoke and flames. In fact, there was nothing to hurry about; a well-ordered system of destruction, continued every day, would end by leaving nothing in the hands of the French, who were obstinately defending the town, but a field of stones around a burned basilica. It was six o'clock; Joseph advanced to one of the

loopholes from which the watchmen could observe the plain.

"My first interview with France," he thought.

And he began to laugh. It was true. So far he had seen nothing, or next to nothing, of this country which they were sending him to fight. Packed in a railway car for several days, then obliged to make long marches in the midst of soldiers, in the mud, at night, the day before occupied in installing the men in a new sector, in overseeing the arrival of munitions and the distribution of the boxes between the posts, he would have been greatly embarrassed to tell what villages he had passed through, what the battlefield looked like east of Rheims.

Ehrsam laughed, but when he had come forward, and as perfectly self-possessed as usual, he leaned forward to look, he ceased laughing and began to draw his blond beard through his fingers, forming a ring, which was, with him, the sign of strong emotion. Yet what an indistinct landscape, and how dark it was! Before Ehrsam, between the point where the trench of the vandals lay and the suburb of Rheims, the distance—he knew it—was about two thousand meters. A cloud of fog, thin and ragged, spreading a few feet above the earth, covered almost the whole of this landscape and the system of wire and the French lines. Joseph perceived the gray picture of a very long, flat town, running downhill a little to the right, and dominated in the middle

by a great shadow ship, with two towers on one end.

The cold was sharp. In the German trenches soldiers passed at a trot to warm themselves. The Alsatian remained before the loophole, with his hands in his pockets, watching for day. Day announced itself in the highest part of the sky, where the brightness of the constellations grew less; where the somber blue of the night became pale and living. One began to see, far off on the other side of Rheims, the hills of Prouilly and the others, but the towers always overtopped them, and mounted in the azure, and between them there shone already a gap where just recently there were darkness and faint stars. Joseph at that moment regretted that he knew no history. The church of St.-Rémy and Clovis, the church of Jeanne d'Arc, the church of the coronations! Yesterday morning he had not the smallest idea about it. So as not to appear wholly uninformed he had made haste to read during the early part of the night a few pages of a German guide which Lieutenant Michaelis had lent him, saying:

"You are fighting against her; learn a little about her."

He had retained only one detail among so many names, dates, and pictures. He, the poor reader, a stranger to the first notions of the arts of building and sculpture, had remained in contemplation before a photograph of the statue of

Eve, placed at the bottom of a rose-window in a transept. At that moment he could see it in his mind, as if it had been there, at the end of the loophole. A strange lad, eager to recover lost time, like a backward plant, his uncultivated but tender heart had been incredibly moved by this figure of the mother of the human race, clad in a long robe, and with her head covered with a light veil. Eve holding on her arm and against her breast the dragon who had deceived her, Eve who remembers Paradise, and the fall and the promise, whose young face has been molded by this regret, this repentance, and this hope, mingled. She smiles, the pardoned one; the angels smile on the tops of the buttresses; the crowned Virgin smiles, too. God! how many smiles there are in this work of old France, and how far one is from grimace, from threats, from conceit, and how calm and reasonable the strength is! This Joseph, transplanted so recently into a new world, had understood something of this. A few faded photographs, a few poor pictures brought from Germany by a soldier who was a dreamer, too, had sufficed to awake, in an Alsatian soul, a great pity, a sympathy for this cathedral of France's glories, which the German shells were encircling with their flame and smoke.

The day was growing light; the fog, in the folds of the earth, had dissolved, and one could discover now the whole naked, deserted plain, where there was not a house nor a hedge nor a

clump of trees nor a trace of former cultivation, but only grass which nobody had cut, and which was lying, all gray, under the rains of winter; earth thrown up out of the trenches, the color of chalk; successive lines of wire and posts, then, at right angles to these parallels, and coming from the suburb Ceres, the road to Cernay, narrow, abandoned, and bordered by two lines of leafless trees. The batteries of Berru continued to send their shells across the plain; the noise of their bursting came fainter, the wind blew waves of smoke toward the cathedral. There was a stoppage in the fire. The smoke was scattered. The apse of the church, striped with shadow by the buttresses and flying buttresses, appeared standing out as in time of peace, and above, shooting up, blossoming, the backs of the two towers, better carved and sculptured than was ever the most beautiful jewel worn by a woman. For they, and the basilica with them, were the jewel presented to Our Lady, the Queen of France. The sky had become blue, the daylight, by degrees, was giving life to the stone. The first direct ray touched the platforms, went down, lighted the long windows, the gallery of the kings, the gables of the transepts. The whole basilica, threatened with death, smiled, too, like Eve, and the dragon did not prevent it.

A loud laugh made Joseph turn round.

"Ha! ha! ha! Fähnrich Ehrsam, I really did not believe you were a poet! I suppose you are

counting the hits, and that you are calculating the time it will take us to gain possession of the good cellars over there. At least twenty million bottles of champagne! You are a gourmand! The desire to taste it must have taken you at Vilna. Do you recollect? The evening when Gothein prepared a marvelous punch, which you did not touch. Ha! ha! ha! that secretive Ehrsam!"

The laugh, natural or forced—it was difficult to know at once when this man was playing a part—made a grimace on Otto Gervasius's features. The captain, with his hands in the pockets of his gray-green tunic, which was barred by the straps from which hung a revolver and an enormous pair of field-glasses, bent over and stood erect in the midst of the trench, like a man seized with a fit of mad laughter, to show the better how he was amused by this meeting, and the spectacle of Joseph Ehrsam in contemplation. The shoulder insignia, edged with red, and the two stars, told his new rank. Some soldiers, from a distance, were watching the chief. Gervasius, decidedly, had no desire to jest, for his face changed as he made two steps toward Joseph, who saluted.

"Go back to the loophole. What were you looking at?"

"The cathedral," said Ehrsam, making himself small along the side of the trench.

"I thought so. A fine victim of our barbarism, isn't it? You hear the shots of the batteries of

Berru? See, the big pieces of Fort de Brimont have got into the game. Ah, the royal explosion!—Look, Ehrsam, the shot carried away at least two hundred meters of the north transept! The cloud of smoke rises as high as the towers. It is going to touch the flock of stone saints and princes whose meditation it interrupted, as I interrupted yours."

"It has blown away."

"This is becoming interesting: the German comrades seem to be firing into the center of the bull's-eye. Come on, the banquette. At this hour the trenches are silent; there is no danger for your precious person, and I have an expensive binocular, a masterpiece of Goertz, which brings objects so close that the statues which the Catholics admire so much seem to be at the end of the glass."

Without any fear, raising his tall form and placing his elbows on the embankment, Gervasius adjusted the glasses, looked through them, and, passing them to Joseph, who, shorter, just had his head above the earth, said:

"I have already studied that. These Frenchmen have perched personages who are odious to me as high as they could."

"Eve?" said the Alsatian, calmly.

"Why do you say Eve? It is ridiculous. Besides, at the foot of the north rose-window, it cannot be seen from here. But I can divine some of their kings who have never ceased making war

or conspiring against us. Take my glasses; I permit you to use them. I know the place of each one at present—the place of their forty-two kings. They please you?"

"I cannot make them out well, but they say that the statues are very fine, Captain; it would be a pity to destroy them," said Ehrsam, giving back the glasses to Gervasius.

"Pity? To destroy old stones cut by clumsy artists? We have a hundred sculptors at Berlin and at Munich who would do a great deal better than these image-makers of the thirteenth century. You are not German, decidedly, Ehrsam."

"That is not what you said to me at Vilna."

"I hoped for something better, in fact. So far as I am concerned, I should like to see all their Charleses thrown down, all their Philips, their Louis and the rest; their Clovis, who fought against the Allemans; their Charles Martel, of whom they are in great need just now; their Pepin the Little, standing on his lion; their Philip Augustus; their Saint-Louis, with his mouth open, no doubt to cry, 'Help!' They have all prevented the free expansion of Germany. But do you know which one I hate the most?"

A ball whistled, and buried itself in the chalk, throwing up a bunch of dry grass, like a field-mouse going to earth.

"You can get down from the step," said the officer.

He came down last and, speaking in a low voice,

said: "I have given you a lesson which you will not forget and which you needed. The one of the heroes glorified by them whom I hate most, Ehrsam, is the man with the flowing beard, born near the Rhine, Charlemagne!"

"Charlemagne?"

"They have put him in a niche of the transept which we are looking at. They have given him the height of a giant. They have placed the crown of the Roman Empire on his head."

"I did not know it."

"What do you know? Figures, and the quality of cotton threads. It is an age-long provocation to the German nation. Charlemagne, who abandoned the worship of the national god, Tuisko, god of the Germanic forests. Charlemagne, who preferred Latin professors, Latin customs, the Latin language to the glorious German traditions, a grizzled abecedarian, bending over the monks' psalter; a traitor king who turned from his race, and, I say it to your face, the first typical Alsatian in our history."

Motionless, become very firm in face and look, Ehrsam replied, "I permit myself to point out to you, Captain, that so far I have not deserved such treatment—"

"So far! But I know your intentions and the secret meetings and the murmurs. You dare to take the defense of all that royal French scum before me, and you say that you do not deserve to be called a bad German? Ehrsam, German

shells obey German wills. Those who burned the woodwork over there, and made holes in the roofs and broke the arms and legs of stone, did it under orders. They did right. I hope others will follow them and will knock down all that pantheon of our mortal enemies. As for you, I warn you, so that when it happens you may not express French sentiments—"

"Sir—"

"French, I say! And do not answer! You will come to me this evening at eight o'clock. I shall have orders to give you."

Ehrsam let the officer go away and went back to the place which he had chosen at first. Though irritated by Gervasius's insults, he was still more so by the way in which the captain had spoken against the church of the lilies of France, against the great men of France, against the whole people which had built this marvel and had sheltered there its greatest memories about its God. He felt more strongly attracted by the cathedral, white in the morning light. He looked at it and he thought:

"That is what they are aiming at. These men, when they are in the presence of a masterpiece, feel the inferiority of their culture and are seized with a rage for destroying the evidence of it. You have everything to fear, Rheims! They will fire at the history of France, of which their own is jealous. Beautiful bishops, princes, kings, you are their enemies because your glory is still alive!

Your nephews no longer remember all your names, but Germany has drawn up the list of these stone victims; she has learned it by heart. Must I be present at this execution, I, the son of that honest man who could not even step on the soil of France without raising his hat before the trees, the springs, the fields, the humblest things in that glorious country? Can I continue to belong to an army which detests Hugh Capet, Clovis, Charlemagne, Joan of Arc, the ampulla of coronation oil? No, I shall not stay."

He turned and started for the dugout in which he lived, following two soldiers who carried a bucket of coffee made of sweet acorns. He had been saluted by them as they passed, and as he saw them joking, young, indifferent, with faces and bearing obsequious at the approach of an officer, he thought, further:

"I am going to command a greater number of these men. They will have to obey me. If I say, 'Begin firing!' they will not fail to kill the sons of those who were my father's fellow-countrymen. That ought not to be. I must make a plan. I shall have the time, for the sector is quiet. In a week I shall have thought out something. Meanwhile, this evening, I have an appointment with a captain whom I can rightly call my enemy."

Joseph went into the deep, well-arranged dugout which was his bedroom, threw himself down on his camp-bed, and slept till noon. He woke

with that feeling of being rested and full of strength which causes one to adhere more strongly to resolutions which one has formed and which one is eager to put into execution. He had to prepare a report for the next day, and he began to write at a table stolen from one of the farms on the hill of Cernay. Strangely enough, all the remarks which he had heard made against Alsace and the Alsatians, at the supper at Vilna in the month of August, came back to his memory and presented themselves to him as intolerable insults, more vividly than before. They excited him to action, they urged him to leave these men, of another sort than himself, and, since there was an Alsace henceforth free from their yoke, to return there, where it must be pleasant to live now. But how to escape?

Two hours after sunset he went to report to his captain. He found him at the end of a veritable cement catacomb, in a little round room, furnished with a table and some chairs, and decorated with statues and mediocre pictures taken from the house of a village notary. Gervasius, lying on a couch from the same source, covered with an old Indian shawl, held out his hand to Ehrsam, made him sit down on a stool, lighted a second electric light that he might the better see the Alsatian's face, and said to him abruptly:

"Ehrsam, I need a trustworthy man. Opposite us, along the Cernay road, the French are doing

something which it is necessary that I should know about. For three nights they have been moving a great deal of earth, stones, and planks. I thought of you."

"Thank you, Captain."

"I see that you accept eagerly."

"Why not? It is an honor to be chosen for a dangerous errand."

Not a word was said which could reveal what the German captain really thought, but when Joseph pronounced the word honor a sort of rapid smile passed over his face. After a moment's silence Gervasius went on:

"You have, in fact, a chance to be discovered, shot at, and killed. Look at the map."

He unfolded and spread on his knees a map on which a tracing of the German and French trenches had been made in red or blue ink, and corrected in pencil, according to information from the aviators or patrols.

"You see," he said, "the road from Cernay to Rheims is crossed at right angles by the first French line, here—"

"I noticed an enormous amount of dirt thrown up, especially on this side of the road."

"Precisely; we must find out what they are building behind their system of wire. I think they are preparing a shelter for machine-guns and trench cannon. I wish to be sure. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"The passage through the enemy's wire is on the left; don't forget that—on the left; twenty meters from the trees by the side of the road. There will be no clouds to-night, a white frost, and no moon. It is a good night for scouting. Besides, thirty minutes after you start I will send up a rocket which will help you to see well."

"How many men shall I have with me?"

"Five or six, so that if you meet a scouting-party of the enemy you can defend yourselves, or even make a prisoner. We have no one in the listening-post in the new trench; it is full of water."

"Very good. At what hour am I ordered to start?"

"Ten o'clock. Ask for volunteers."

Ehrsam rose, saluted, and was going out when the captain, contrary to his habit, called him back and retracted an order which he had given.

"No," said he. "Do not pick out your men. I will attend to that."

As he said this Gervasius looked at Joseph with the same expression which he had in the wood at Vilna, after the Alsatian secret meeting.

"The men of the patrol will be before your dugout at a quarter to ten. Set your watch."

As he left the captain, the Alsatian thought: "I have certainly been condemned by this police dog. When he asked me to become an officer in the wood at Vilna it was because he hoped that I would refuse once more, and that then some

superior, whom I do not know, would inflict an exemplary punishment on me. When one is an Alsatian, it is very suspicious to refuse indefinitely to be an officer in the German army. Now that I have consented to become an officer, he wants to get rid of me. Two reconnaissances on this point of the French line have failed already—only one man got back—and Gervasius counts on my not returning."

Up to a quarter to ten Ehrsam was pretty nervous. He finished drawing the map of the ground which he was going over, took a book, and after a few minutes left it open on the table, as he did not understand what he read. Then he received a visit from a comrade, a *Fähnrich* like himself, the son of a merchant of Cologne, who apologized for troubling him and said:

"I have learned, Ehrsam, that you have been chosen for a difficult errand this evening, and I wanted to shake hands with you. We do not know each other very well. I am a new-comer in the regiment, but, you see, I have heard so much about the bad feeling of the Alsatians toward my German Fatherland that I was anxious to show you openly how proud I was at seeing you, on the contrary, give this proof of loyalty. You will excuse me, in spite of the difference in our ages."

There were, in fact, four years between the ages of the young men, and much more distance between their minds. The Alsatian looked with

a certain amount of emotion at this young fellow in whom race hatred had not yet developed itself.

"My dear boy, novelists have devoted themselves to analyzing the incompatibility of temper between husband and wife, but how much more serious and dramatic it is when two people are concerned, who cannot agree, and one of them is great and powerful and the other weak, yet unable to yield."

The innocent from Cologne opened his blue eyes still wider.

"Why not yield, since it is the weaker? That is stupid."

"Youngster," said Ehrsam, "the beauty of the world is often made of these stupidities. Come, help me to get into my things. I may never have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Nonsense, my dear boy! We shall see each other again, on the contrary, and I wish you good luck. The passage in the wire is at the right, you know."

"You are sure? On the right?"

"I discovered it myself, one night."

The Rhenish comrade handed Joseph Ehrsam the revolver which was hanging on one of the wooden posts supporting the roof, and wrapped up in a piece of newspaper a bit of bread which he also held out to him, saying:

"Take my advice. When I start on an expedition I always take something to eat; it keeps your courage up. I am only sorry not to see a

good sausage; it would have gone with the bread so well."

Ehrsam went quietly up the steps of the sap, and found in the trench six men in gray uniform, with the covers on their helmets, seated on the firing-step, to the right of the entrance. They rose when they saw the *Fähnrich*, who perceived at a glance that they had given him first-class soldiers, three Prussians, Johann Koster, Willy Reinecke, Hellmuth Rathke; two Saxons, Heinrich Zeitler and Max Dorfelt; one man from Baden, Hans Zahn, all very reliable, brave as well, and all decorated with the Iron Cross. Ehrsam took the head, followed the trench for about eight hundred meters, and stopped at the mouth of a recently dug communication trench which advanced in zigzags toward the road from Cernay to Rheims. Contrary to the captain's prophecy, the night was dark; low clouds, which had been brought by a change of wind to the west, shed a fine rain which found the earth saturated everywhere and ran in the hollows, the furrows, and the folds in the soil. The trench was changed into a brook, which emptied itself by this cutting made in the side of the talus. The *Fähnrich* stopped the patrol with a sign. The men stood, bent back, pressing against one another, and Ehrsam, smaller than they, felt their panting breath on his neck.

"Attention!" said he. "For fifty meters we are in sight of the enemy. There are some planks

thrown on the parapets, which form a tunnel, but there are openings in the roof. No noise! Then the trench turns to the right, and stops at twenty paces from the road. A small post cannot be established there yet on account of the water, but you can stay there?"

"Yes."

"I will cross the road. In ten minutes a rocket will be fired from our lines, and then you can examine what sort of work the French are engaged on, on this side of the road, and expose yourselves as little as possible. I shall be on the other side. Non-commissioned-officer Koster, you will make the report. Now forward! Stoop down!"

The seven men who formed the patrol started in single file under the boards from which the rain dripped. From the outset they staggered, slipping on the melted chalk, which became deeper and deeper. Soon the water reached to their calves, then to their knees. Joseph could hear behind him a soft sound like that of mortar being mixed, as the soldiers pulled their boots out of the clinging mud, only to strike it again with the whole width of their soles. Then the trench turned to the right. The wind blew over their helmets. They could divine before them dark lines at regular intervals; they were the trees on this bit of road, situated between the hostile lines, which belonged to nobody, unless it were Death, which was always passing that way. The men crowded into a sort of round well, around

which there were firing-steps which were covered with dry branches and some shovelfuls of chalk.

"Wait for me here," said the *Fähnrich*. "Not a shot, unless you are attacked. And you are absolutely forbidden to come to my help if I am attacked, or even to show yourselves."

Six "*ja's!*" spoken in a low voice, were the reply.

The Alsatian looked at his watch with the phosphorescent face. It was twelve minutes after ten. Getting up on the firing-step, he climbed out of the trench. Without hurrying, he crossed the twenty meters which separated him from the road, and threw himself behind the trunk of one of the trees beside it. Then he looked toward the west. So far as he could see, the road was empty and smooth for a hundred meters. There something gray and round closed the road, no doubt a barricade of artificial briers. There, too, no doubt, men were standing on the watch, ready to fire, behind the parapet of marl. The Alsatian stopped only long enough to rub the sole of his shoes, heavily loaded with mud, on the grass of the bank. Opposite him, on the other side of the road, he could see a Canada poplar, with its top cut off by a cannon-shot, at the foot of which its shoots formed a clump. Beyond that he would find in the plain at his right the system of barbed wire, and perhaps the passage about which there was a question. He had hardly left his shelter when a well-aimed ball struck the macadam close to him and struck sparks. A machine-gun

joined in and played its rattling air. Ehrsam had already crossed the road and was leaning against the broken tree-trunk. Twenty projectiles were whistling around him. At the same time, as though the tree spoke and laughed, a voice cried out:

"Ha, ha! I was waiting for you!"

A man was there, taller than he, leaning against the trunk, like him, in the clump of new branches.

"Where is the patrol, Ehrsam?"

The Alsatian, who so far had not thought that he might use his arms, thrust his hand into the leather holster and grasped the handle of his revolver. With the other hand he pointed back to the trench where he had left his men.

"I already understood that," said the German. "You are deserting and you are getting rid of the witnesses. I judged you long ago. Now I will execute you."

A shot, fired point-blank, which ought to have gone through his breast, burned Ehrsam's neck below his ear; it was followed, so closely that the detonations were blended in the night, by another shot which killed its man. Gervasius fell without a groan, without a death-rattle, with arms extended and head high, touching the tree, his large cloak outspread like a fan around his thin body.

Immediately a rocket rose from the German trenches, to the rear, while from the near-by French lines, and from ten different points,

bullets searched the grass on the bank, the space between the trees, the sloping pastures, lighted by the rocket.

Ehrsam had thrown himself on the ground. When the light had disappeared, he ran straight before him, toward the French lines, without trying to shelter himself, crying out:

"Don't fire! It is Alsace!"

They did not hear him or they did not believe him; the balls continued to whistle. He threw himself down again, began to crawl, was again seen and fired at, reached the wire, looked for a passage, and, as he could not find it, stood upright, with his right hand raised, waving his cap with the red band, shouting with all his strength:

"Come and save me, you Frenchmen!"

An hour later he was questioned in the post of command of an infantry colonel. Received with politeness and distrust, he could not wholly dispel, either by the information which he gave regarding the troops opposite or by the identification papers which he had with him, the strong shade of skepticism with which they received his repeated affirmations:

"I could not live with them any longer. I come from a free valley in Alsace. I want to live there, and here I am!" At last, furious at not being believed, he said:

"I have only one more proof to give you, but you will have to go and get it! There is a German captain of infantry lying dead in the road opposite

you, in his gray cloak, with his arms outspread. His name is Otto Gervasius. It is I who killed him."

At daybreak a French patrol had brought back the captain's field-glasses and revolver.

"Monsieur Ehrsam," said an adjutant who joined the Alsatian a little behind the lines, in the cellar of a ruined house, "I must take you to the Paris suburb in Rheims, where you will find an automobile going to Châlons. You can explain matters there. Here is your safe-conduct."

After having been kept two weeks at the special camp for Alsace-Lorrainers at St.-Rambert, Joseph, who had been able to get the help of several influential persons at Paris, obtained authorization to go to Masevaux. He had not enlisted. He was not a Frenchman.

XIV

THE INVITATION

HE arrived at Masevaux on the afternoon of Monday, December 20th. The military automobile had stopped under the trees of the little square at the door of the administration offices. He immediately crossed the place and went, by way of the Chemin du Marché and the Chemin du Chariot, toward the Rougemont road —that is to say, toward the factory. He walked fast, without looking at anybody, except out of the corner of his eye, not giving himself the pleasure of looking at these familiar houses, these signs, these faces, which formed a part of the pictures of his past. Above all, he was anxious about going into the factory yard. What was he going to encounter? What witness was he going to meet first in what he called his "costume of a Half-Boche"? For with the little money which he had left he had been able to buy a blue flannel coat and a cheap summer overcoat, but his trousers and his boots were still those of a non-commissioned officer of the Imperial German Army.

"If my mother," he thought, "or my workmen were to see me like this, what sort of a reception would they give me?"

Stooping a little, so that the overcoat might cover the bottom of the gray-green trousers with the red stripe, he opened the wicket in the factory gate and, standing on the step of the porter's lodge, asked:

"Is my mother in the house?"

"Oh, Monsieur Joseph! Are you back?"

"Yes, my good Kuhn! Is she in the house?"

"No, monsieur; at this hour she is always in the office. Since the war, the poor lady works all day."

"Ah, so much the better!"

The old woman watched him, stupefied. Joseph was already going toward the house. When he had gone in he rang for the maid and said, without replying to Anna's exclamations:

"I forbid you to tell my mother that I have come. Only, put the best suit which I had before the war in my room."

Not till an hour later, when he had made his toilet and was dressed like an Alsatian, did he send word to his mother, and open the door for her as she came hurrying with a radiant face.

"And to think that you never notified me! Ah, what a child! I should have gone to Belfort to meet you! How are you? Well, I see. You have not been wounded? Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?" She kissed him. "How happy I

am! My dearest boy, it was through you that I suffered the most; but you are the first to come back, and for good, for good!"

In her joy at recovering her son she never stopped looking at him. She had him, there before her, in the house in which she had passed such sad nights and so many hours of the day, worrying over the fate of Pierre and Joseph, in despair at the weakness of that imagination which she besought in vain, and which was becoming incapable of showing her the true picture of her two sons. The open face of the elder, and that other face, indifferent, enigmatic, always the same, in its framing of blond beard. Joseph, seated before her, with his body bent forward, was absolutely the same man who had left her sixteen months before. She would have liked to know everything, every detail of every one of the hours of this absence, the journeys, the fights, but, above all, the thoughts. She tried to make him tell her what injustices, what ill-treatment, perhaps, he had suffered, and how, his hatred growing little by little, he had finally resolved to cross the lines at the risk of his life. But, no, nothing or next to nothing. To so many questions he answered only by two refrains, which she was never weary of hearing, it is true. He said:

"I could not live with them any longer," and, "I am glad to be back in our Alsace."

The next day he went back to work; he became

again the devoted chief, careful about small things, cordial with the employees and the workmen, entirely absorbed by the thousand problems of a management which the war had rendered singularly difficult. How was the German clientèle to be replaced? Where could they get coal? Where could they buy the bales of cotton, and how could they get them to the factory? Could they count on new orders from the French government, to which Denner had made one sale?

At first Madame Ehrsam had spoken of Pierre only prudently. She was afraid that fighting against France might have diminished Joseph's love for that older brother who was fighting for France. But no; Joseph showed himself, on the contrary, very anxious to know everything that concerned Pierre, to read some of the letters which he had written, and when he learned, about Christmas, that his brother would come on leave about January 20th he showed great happiness. His mother took advantage of the occasion; she had no doubt already made up her mind on the point which she was going to submit to Joseph, but, being anxious to re-establish between her sons the brotherly friendship which she thought the war had diminished in spite of appearances, and to keep her younger son at Masevaux, she wished to show him what share she would have him take henceforth in the family life. She said to him, therefore, on Christmas morning, as she was coming back from mass:

"Listen, Joseph; I had a long letter from your brother yesterday."

"I know it; I saw that you were preoccupied last evening, but as you had already refused to tell me anything whatever—"

"Refused? No."

"In telling me that he was well you refused to tell me anything more, so I did not insist."

"Very well. I want to ask your advice. Your brother is in love with a Frenchwoman."

Instead of going back to the house, they continued on up between the plane-trees on the road to Rougemont; in this way there would be no witnesses and the secret would be well guarded. The mother, taking from her pocket a letter which she had read several times, quoted passages from it and commented on them, telling how Pierre had known Mademoiselle Marie de Clairepée; how she had refused to receive any more letters after Hubert's death; finally she drew the portrait, in a few well-chosen and graphic words, of this young girl whom she had seen only for an instant between two companions. How dear and living the memory had remained!

"That was four months ago. Since then I have had no news. I see from all his letters, and although he tries to hide it from me, that Pierre is suffering cruelly. I am sorry that you do not know this young girl."

"You have described her, I think, as my brother would have done."

"No doubt, but perhaps you would be better able than I to tell whether this resolution which she has formed is not an indirect way of signifying a positive refusal to your brother. Pride—no matter which, that of fortune, rank, or nothing—so often prevents a woman from seeing where her happiness would lie."

"Ask her to explain!"

The mother, as she looked at him, seemed young, for she was thinking of what she would have done herself when she was twenty years old.

"No, Joseph; if one suggests to one of these young things to change its decision, one rarely succeeds. One must ask her something else, so that she may be surprised, astonished, tempted."

"Then what would you ask her?"

The mother murmured, in an absent-minded way, "Something more."

She waited, stopping as if to study the landscape. They had reached the second turning, after which the Rougemont road really decides to climb the hill and reach the wood without further wandering. Joseph began to laugh, and said, aloud, to the woods and the fields:

"Mamma, I have an idea, a good one, and I am going to tell it to you."

No matter how gifted a woman is she gets great strength from the presence and the advice of a man; she gains in not having to fatigue herself with introspection. Madame Ehrsam felt that she was understood; she was delighted to

think that she would have Joseph's advice to support her if Pierre should reproach her some day. She was certain, for the first time, that Joseph was entirely frank and gave her his whole confidence.

"Well, what is the idea?"

"It is something bold and difficult; write to Mademoiselle Marie de Clairepée—"

"And say?"

"That she is loved, and that she ought to come here to a house in the town, that she may get to know that fine fellow who is your son and my brother, and, knowing him, to love him, too."

"You really think that I ought to—"

"I am sure of it."

As that was precisely the idea which she had had herself, Madame Ehrsam wanted her son to insist and urge her farther.

"I am afraid that she might not wish to. Perhaps an Alsatian would be capable of responding to this appeal; the war excuses these unusual steps. Yes, I believe that one of our young girls might be capable of accepting. We make up our minds quickly. But these young French girls, at least those who do not live near the frontier, cannot know, even to-day, how to disregard so many usages and customs with which their lives are encumbered."

Joseph replied, positively, "Very well, we will judge her by her reply; you must write."

He rubbed his hands at thinking of what would

happen if Mademoiselle de Clairepée did not refuse to come, and the unexpected joy of Pierre at finding at home, in the midst of the war, his mother, his brother, and that Provençale whose name would sound for the first time among the Alsatian mountains.

"Come," he said, "add a little to the sketch which you drew a few minutes ago. I am doubtful, as you may imagine, about my elder brother's enthusiasms. Is she tall and well built? Is she good? Does she know how to keep house? Tell me if I shall not be too much intimidated when I see her."

They talked very affectionately on their way back to the house. As they were going in, Madame Ehrsam, who saw that her son was more inclined to talk confidentially than usual, stopped and asked:

"You still believe in the success of the Germans?"

"Yes."

"You believed in it when you left their army?"

"When one has belonged to that army, doubt is no longer possible; it cannot be beaten."

"Well, I prefer that you should have that illusion! Nobody can pretend, at any rate, that you abandoned a sinking ship."

Joseph started back.

"Has any one said it?"

"Not to me, I promise you!"

"To others, perhaps? The worst sort of cal-

umnies have gone the round of the world in which we live before we found them out."

"No, my irritable child, you need not be afraid of the opinions of our friends—"

"I have enemies, too."

"What you have done is noble and worthy of you. You continue to believe in the victory of the Germans and you come back because experience has convinced you. You have not the same nature as the people on the other side of the Rhine."

"Thank God!"

"You prefer, if they win some day, to go into exile with us?"

"Exactly."

"I have had a very happy walk, Joseph."

"And I, too. Where are you going?"

"Why—to write."

"Although this is Christmas Day, I am going through the mail, and I will join you when you have finished your letter," said Joseph.

Madame Ehrsam began to write:

MADEMOISELLE,—I think that mothers, by giving life, come to know all sorrows—even happy mothers. This is why I can assure you that the grief which your brother's death caused you is shared here, and that I was not surprised to see you bid my son break off a correspondence in which he found his whole happiness. He received that letter at the same time as the other, in which you permitted him to say to you, on the contrary, what his heart felt and hoped. The reply never reached you, since you forbade it to come.

I ask, after four months of silence, permission to write to

you for my son, and in his place. He does not know what I am doing. He has become an officer; he is fighting at this moment on the Lorraine front. They are not large battles, for the hard winter brings at least a certain quiet in the war, but surprise attacks are frequent, bullets and shells continue to kill men, and my heart is never at rest for a single hour.

Nor is his. He does not fear for his life, but he suffers from that love with which you have inspired him, and which he has not even been able to tell you. I see it in every letter which my son writes me; this feeling which he has had for you from the very first day has grown in waiting, then under denial. He recognized in you, I am sure, the generosity, the fine and ancient education, faith, warmth of devotion, all the beautiful reasons which bear the hearts of Alsatians toward France. There again I discover a sign of his French calling. Perhaps he would not confess it; symbols are loved only in their places and in dreams. Love goes first and always to a creature elect and living; it was your charm which won my son Pierre; it is the memory of L'Abadié which has grown so as to fill his whole heart.

My son is unhappy. I beg you, mademoiselle, to have pity on him. He will not write to you, he will do nothing to displease you. I, on the contrary, ask of you something which is worthy of the time in which we live and of your race, which knew how to dare whenever it was necessary; come to Alsace. Pierre will have his first leave the 19th or 20th of January. You will stay with one of my friends, who lives in an old mansion in our city, and, if it pleases God, if it pleases you, some day you will be the betrothed of my Pierre. Until then, pray as I shall pray myself. I should not have written you if I did not know, if I were not sure, that your brother's son would always have his place in the house which will be yours, if you wish it.

I am not unaware, mademoiselle, that the life which will be offered you will not resemble that which you have led until now; neither the climate nor the landscape, the occupa-

tions nor the associations, will be the same, if you marry Pierre, as if you had remained in Provence; but I have some idea that these habits of honor and of loyalty, and of firm religion, which are the finest things which Pierre loves in you, will find themselves at home in Alsace, if Alsace wins you. I assure you that you will feel it quickly as soon as you know the heart of this country.

From all that I know of you, from my son's letters, which are full of you, I promise you that you will be loved here, not only by him, but by the mother who has written this letter with deep feeling and who awaits your answer as she awaits news of her son after a great battle.

SOPHIE EHRSAM, NÉE RIFFEL.

When Marie de Clairepée received the letter with the Masevaux postmark, she was starting for the village and there was a high wind. She opened the envelope and began to read it as she went across the court. But hardly had she passed the frontier of L'Abadié and taken the road to St.-Baudile when she stopped and rested her hand on the grille. For she was troubled even to the secret powers which govern us in the loftiest part of the soul. She seemed to hold on there only to make a shelter where the letter which she held in her hand might tremble a little less; her large nurse's cloak, driven forward by the mistral, made a wall on both sides. But it was the emotion, the weakness of a surprised heart, which had stopped her there. She read the sentences, then read them over again. The wind whistled; it said to her:

"You have suddenly grown old, young girl,

that you seek something to lean on! I leave nothing in peace to-day, neither a leaf nor an apron, nor any one walking on the roads. They obey me, and move. But you do not move. You do not resemble any of the women whom I have met between Avignon and here."

Marie began to walk slowly; she went away from L'Abadié only by a violent and repeated effort of her will. Go among others at the hospital, when fate was questioning her and asking, "Will you accept?" Certainly, like many young girls, she had desired to be loved, and Pierre's letters were still locked in the drawers of the table up-stairs. She was flattered and touched by that love which could obey and respect the mourning of the house. She had even foreseen that the question would be asked one day:

"Marie de Clairepée, would you leave your father and all your friends in Provence to become the wife of Pierre Ehrsam? Marie de Clairepée, you are loved by this son of a distant and unknown house; the family which will be born of you, this indefinite following which may be given to you, is he worthy to be its chief, so that the old knights may have no reproaches to make you from the depths of their tombs? What is this young man, who has not had the same pictures and the same words to educate him that you have, to whom you must soon give your youth and that heart which is not yet given?"

This young girl, warm-hearted and wise, but

wise first, who went about her daily work of charity, did not resemble so many poor children, so eager to love and to be loved that they do not wait before announcing to their friends:

"I have my engagement ring, a rose, a pearl, a ruby. See!"

She felt mistress of herself. She loved Pierre, but she kept from confessing it, not knowing him altogether, for fear that he might not be the only man in the world for her. Her heart beat, the veins of her temples buzzed like two swarms of bees, as she went down toward the hospital. There was a great struggle in her. The prudence of the Christian virgin warned her and made her strong against her own inclination; but this higher prudence had an ally, too. Marie was descended from those small landowning gentry who had had difficulty in maintaining their little property, their honor, their position, during the centuries, and, attractive as they were, and lively in their words and gestures, they hesitated before making up their minds, and were slow to bind themselves. They lived again in her at this decisive hour.

She looked for her father in the hospital wards toward the end of the afternoon. She found him talking, as he often did, to the managers in the lower hall, where there was continually the movement of people passing through, and asked him:

"Will you wait for me? I will come out at half past five this evening, and we can go home together."

So it was on the road where she had read him

Madame Ehrsam's letter that she consulted M. de Clairepée.

He, since the war had taken his son from him, did not meet the small troubles or the unexpected things of life with the same impatience which formerly marked his manner.

"Now that my flesh is rotting in the cemetery," he said, "nothing matters."

It was only partly true, and he knew it perfectly.

So he came back against the wind, plowing head down into the current of the mistral. His overcoat and Marie's gown twisted about behind them and snapped like table-cloths drying on a clothesline after being washed. The young girl held out before her, in her two hands, the letter which had come from Alsace. She read it aloud, and the wind carried the words away in the direction of St.-Baudile. The father heard them, nevertheless, and, having realized what life at L'Abadié would be without Marie and without Maurice, he had fought with himself not to interrupt her. He continued to listen to the phrases read with a secret feeling of feminine pride which he understood. Still, incapable of wholly concealing his weakness and his pain, he turned his face, as he walked on, to the side away from his daughter, so that she might not see him weep. He looked toward Avignon. And when she had finished reading the whole letter, including the signature, "Sophie Ehrsam, née Riffel," they were still walking beside each other, as though the father

had nothing to reply. Marie also began to look toward the quarter of the plain from which the wind came, and she waited like one who has nothing more to say. The silence was not very long. There was still a rebounding energy in the master of L'Abadié, in spite of his sorrows, and the old Provençal had no sooner perceived the smoke of his house above the leafless trees than he said:

"In time of peace a girl would not take a journey in order to get to know the man who asks her hand. But the war has disturbed many other customs. She gives you five days in which to decide your whole life. What do you think of it? Do you feel strong enough to make the journey alone? For I would not go with you; I would not leave the child alone with anybody, not even with Marine or Dido."

"I was going to ask you to do that."

"Then you have made up your mind?"

"To what?"

"To get married."

"If he is what I hope."

M. de Clairepée stopped dreaming about Avignon, and turned his face toward the façade of L'Abadié, which was nearer.

"Marie, if you accept, a little later—"

"Yes, a little later. Don't worry."

"What would you regret?"

"I should regret you, my dear father, my Provence, and my name."

He made up his mind to look at her, and he saw that her face, the tender and pitying face, was nevertheless smiling.

"I," he said, simply, "am destined to be separated from everything, little by little. I have said good-by more than once already. I ought not to count. Nor Provence, either. Many of her daughters have married in distant places. One of your ancestresses settled in the Rhine Marches in the time of the Three Bishoprics. What does it matter? The seed flies away, but the name? You could exchange it for another as fine, perhaps."

"That is true."

"It cost a great deal of pains and blood to those who forged, polished, and stamped it with its coat of arms."

"I shall suffer at having to leave it. But never tell this; it shall be my unknown dowry. You used to repeat to me when we worked together in the evening: 'Marie, we must wear our title of nobility only on Sundays. The other six days—that is, almost the whole time—we cause it to be forgotten by our unpretentiousness.'"

"Yes, I said it, but at a distance. Things do not always look the same when they are close. Well, go, my child, and do as your heart prompts. I ask only one thing, do not answer the letter before to-morrow morning."

After dinner the mistral, which had been blowing since morning, stopped shaking the tiles and

snoring in the chimneys. No doubt it had finished its rôle of "manjo-fango" (mud-eater). The breeze became very soft, and in the sky, swept clear of all dust by a little rain which had fallen, the stars rose infinitely brilliant. Marie, who had retired early, thought at her window of the great journey which she was going to make, of all the past, and of all that might possibly happen in the future.

The next morning she sent a telegram to Masevaux. She announced that she would arrive on Wednesday, January 19th.

XV

THE RED SALON

THE secret had been well kept at Masevaux. No one suspected that they were awaiting a visit from a Red Cross nurse from Provence. Pierre, too, did not know what his mother had done. Never had Madame Ehrsam had so contented an air since the beginning of the war, not even after the Marne. She was going to receive her two sons together. People said to her:

"Really, dear Madame Ehrsam, you are growing young again. We can understand that it is happiness at having recovered Monsieur Joseph."

"That is true; nobody has a more attentive son than he."

"And he keeps so much at home. It seems to me that nobody, or hardly anybody, has seen him since he came back to Masevaux. He never walks out or shows himself at any gathering."

"Business keeps him busy all the time."

"You are happy now, but when your other son gets his leave you will be the happiest mother in all Masevaux."

She to whom these compliments were addressed

did not need to hear them to notice that Joseph was more unsociable than formerly, and more silent. She had tried to take him out with her; one day, for instance, when she was going to pay the woodmen who were cutting some wood above Huppach, he who loved walking in the mountains had replied:

"No, I have too much work in the factory."

He had excused himself in the same way for not having called on his relatives in the town, or those in Thann or Kirchberg. Unlike so many soldiers who love to tell about the battles in which they were engaged, their sufferings from cold, heat, and long marches, he only replied, when he was questioned, by deliberate commonplaces, choosing the flattest, which soon tired the questioner out. His mother no longer tried to learn what he had done in Russia, in Poland, or even in France. It was only when he spoke Pierre's name in her presence that she saw Joseph's eye brighten. Prompt to grasp reasons for hope, like all imaginative creatures, she concluded from this that there probably would be no unpleasant discussion between the brothers when Pierre returned. She counted the days which separated her from that day when Pierre, Joseph, and Mademoiselle de Clairepée should be with her.

On Wednesday, January 19th, when Joseph returned from the office, about nine o'clock in the morning, he found his mother talking to Anna.

"Certainly, the red salon."

"Madame says that we must open the salon and sweep and polish it and dust it? A room which has not been opened—"

"Since my poor husband's death; you are right. To-day I am opening the room because Pierre is coming home. It is a fête, my dear girl. Just think of it, an officer in the French army, cited in the order of the day! Go to work, and if you need help I will give it to you. Get everything ready! To-morrow we are also going to receive two friends who are coming to pay us a visit. They will lunch here."

"But madame will not think of such a thing!"

"What is the matter?"

"The review to-morrow of the French and Moroccan soldiers. The general will hold it in the market-place at nine o'clock."

"Anna, it is most unfortunate. But begin by cleaning the salon thoroughly. After that we will see—"

"Precisely," said Joseph's loud voice, as he came in, "it is a great fête! We must have Alsatian dishes, made from the old Alsatian recipes. You must see, Anna, that there are three glasses at each place. And I will go into the cellar this evening and select from our best reserves of Riquewehr, Ribeauville, and Thann, which will never have a finer opportunity to do honor to the soil of Alsace."

Madame Ehrsam, pleased to see her son's

enthusiasm, and laughing at the surprise of Anna, who was returning to her kitchen, said to Joseph:

"You see, I have my bonnet on my head; you ought to come with me to pay a visit to Reinhardt, who got back three days ago."

"I knew it."

"Cured, no doubt, but crippled. He had his right arm amputated. He was a brave man!"

She had no sooner said this than she regretted it. A look from her son asked, "Is she making a comparison?" But it was only a fleeting expression, for the younger brother's face cleared up with a friendly smile, and he said:

"I will go to Baerenhof, mamma, if it will give you pleasure. I have worked so much these last days that I shall be half free during Pierre's visit."

"And Mademoiselle Marie's."

"Yes, the unknown. I am not like you; I have not seen her, and I have not a very high opinion of Frenchwomen in general. Do you know what time she will arrive?"

"Not before the end of the afternoon. I expect that your brother will be at Masevaux about eleven, so we have plenty of time. Shall we go?"

He took his hat and a thick holly stick and resumed the conversation as he went across the court with his mother.

"The real happiness for me is in Pierre's return. These two brothers, whom nothing had separated, have been separated by everything for eighteen

months. If I did not love him as I do, I would wish that he had no other company than our own, no plans but those which we made together. But he will not belong to us any more; this stranger will take his heart and his mind."

"Be easy; we are going to find again his love for you and for me. I have no doubt about him, or about you. I will even confess that I am delighted to see that you are thinking of nothing else. For the month that you have been here I have sometimes thought you a little sad. Was I mistaken?"

At that moment they were passing through the gate of the factory and were beginning to go up toward the farm. The winter sun shed its tempered light on everything. Joseph pointed to the plateau and the slopes of meadow and woods which rose behind it.

"Winter, war, and anxiety about everything are not very gay."

"No, don't let us complain! Are we not among the favored ones? I have got you back. You have taken your old place among our employees and our workmen, you are doing the work which you prefer. It only depends on you to see our friends again. Finally, you have around you—not entire, alas! but living—a portion of that Alsace from which you have told me a hundred times you could not be separated; besides, you have shown it clearly. What more do you want?"

"Pierre, mamma, my brother Pierre, and the liberty to work with him when peace has come."

"I imagined—"

"What, for Heaven's sake?"

"Mothers, you know, have the habit of tormenting themselves about nothing."

Joseph looked at her with anxious eyes in which passed this question, assuredly, "Could she read what is struggling in the depths of me?" He did not look at her long; he was afraid of that divination which maternity adds to the other gifts of women, and he said:

"Look, mamma, there is Victor Reinhardt in the field down there."

They reached the steps of pine logs which led up to Baerenhof. Anne-Marie opened the door of her house, and it really brightened the day, the apparition of this young mother who was coming down to meet Madame Ehrsam. Motherly pride, the happiness of having recovered her husband, the pride, too, of being the wife of a brave man, had molded Anne-Marie's face anew. There was no sign of trouble in it, the baby was growing, the business affairs of Baerenhof must be prospering, and when she had said good morning to her friends from the Ehrsam factory she made a gesture as if to point out her treasure, the reason for her existence, when she waved her hand toward the young peasant in the plowed field, a hundred meters from there, and said:

"He is never far away now! See, he is working with Antoine, who is driving the horse."

"Poor Victor!" said Madame Ehrsam. "Only one arm!"

"Oh, well, one becomes accustomed to everything," said the wife. "He hardly suffers at all, now. And then, he has come back."

Joseph, who was watching Anne-Marie, saw that she was paying no attention to him, that this simple soul, come back to its former peace, had not for a second thought of comparing the parts which these young men had played in the war, Victor of Baerenhof and Joseph of the factory. He was pleased at this, and as he started to walk beside his mother said:

"She is a nice woman; there is nothing spiteful about her."

Madame Ehrsam did not perceive the secret meaning in the compliment; she was watching the rustic scene formed a little ahead of them by Antoine, who was driving a cart across the fallow field, stopping it every ten meters, to pull out and drop on the hillocks, with the help of a shovel, a heap of manure equal to those which he had already arranged in straight lines, and which Victor, his brother and his master, was spreading with a fork. Really this cripple used the stump of his right arm with singular skill, placing the handle of the fork in his armpit and so finding a double point of support to raise the load which he formerly raised by the combined effort of his

two hands. The whole movement of the body was changed. The man twisted his body to the right with each forkful which he spread, but in fact the work was done almost as quickly, and the field would soon be able to nourish the crop in its well-manured soil. As they came forward Madame Ehrsam and Joseph also admired the fine look of the master of Baerenhof; Victor still wore his fighting look, that sort of severity and boldness which disappears by degrees from the faces of discharged soldiers, but is never effaced in the case of veterans. As he rose, dropping his fork and raising his left arm to salute, one could see on his breast, over his heart, a bit of yellow ribbon striped with green, already faded.

Victor held out his hand to Madame Ehrsam and to Joseph, but he spoke principally to the mother, as though he had been more at ease with her.

"Well, madame, you see that we have got to work again; it goes pretty well; everything is behindhand, and what I am doing now I ought to have done four months ago." He began to laugh heartily. "But I was busy at another sort of work then, you know."

Joseph had the impression, perhaps a mistaken one, that when Victor said this he avoided looking at him, the former *Fähnrich*, and he turned his head in the direction in which the cart was going, followed by the farm-hand. Madame Ehrsam and Victor talked for a few minutes; the names

of France's battles sounded in the air of Alsace, the numbers of regiments were recalled, then recollections of the hospital, words which had been spoken by officers or comrades when Victor had left them after being wounded. Then, with his peasant's politeness, fearing that Joseph would feel hurt at being only a listener, turned toward him and asked:

"Well, Monsieur Joseph, are you happy, too? Here you are back at home."

But his naturally caustic Alsatian temperament carried him away, and he added:

"And not wounded, I see."

Joseph replied rudely, eying the peasant, who looked like a young Gaul, with his drooping mustache, "I might have been, as you are, and I think that I suffered more."

"Bah!" said Reinhardt, conciliatingly. "You will forget that. It is good to be at home!"

After these words with a double meaning Madame Ehrsam understood that it was time to retire and that she had been wrong in bringing Joseph with her. He, for that matter, had already turned away; having raised his hat, he had started for home. His mother caught up with him and they had not made fifty paces side by side when Joseph said to her:

"Did you see? Ah, how they despise me, those who come back from the front! If Pierre is like this Reinhardt we shall not be together very long!"

"My poor Joseph, you are angry over nothing. Because this man looked at you with what I am sure was a friendly smile—"

"Nonsense! And the care which he took to remind me that I was not wounded?"

"It was not your duty to get yourself killed or wounded. Nobody can blame you because you escaped! You misunderstand everything."

"Not at all; I understand them as they are spoken, and I assure you that this man is not the only one who thinks about me in the same way."

"But you have seen nobody, my child."

"Don't deceive yourself; the reason why I have talked to people so little is because I have foreseen what they would say to me, because I have seen their looks, and have guessed from the movement of their lips the words which they were saying in an undertone to the wife or the mother who was walking beside them. 'Hullo! here is the younger Ehrsam, the one who fought on the other side. Now he is quietly running his factory while all young men are still fighting all over the world; among the Germans, whom he has deserted, among the French whom he will not join!'"

"No, Joseph, nobody thinks that. I can understand that you might have done better if you had gone with Pierre at the beginning, but I know, too, that you have been brave and patient, and that you were in great danger, if only in escaping.

Your presence here is valuable, you are doing a service to our Alsace, and you are doing such a great one to your poor mother!"

She was silent for a moment, and then, when she had gone so far from the farm that she could not be heard, she began her questions again, determined to know at last what she would have to suffer on the morrow.

"See here, you don't mean to leave me, at any rate?"

He did not answer. Full of anguish, she placed her trembling hand on Joseph's shoulder and her words poured forth.

"That was what I imagined, that was what I feared. Can't you understand? When you were both summoned to Mulheim the end of July, 1914, my horror of Germany made me cry to you, 'Go the other way; leave for the west!' But everything is changed now, my son. Tell me that you understand!"

"Yes, everything is changed."

"Ah, you don't answer me yet as I want you to. I have been one of the most unhappy mothers in the world, with my two sons in armies which were fighting each other. How often have I seen you in my imagination, my God! charging each other, or directing the fire of machine-guns and rifles against one another, and now your return does not bring me the relief which I hoped for, which I was beginning to have. I am afraid because you tell me nothing."

"Is it my habit to talk? You know very well that it is not. I am like a clock—"

"What is the meaning of this joke?"

"When one wakes up at night and wants to know what time it is, it always strikes the half-hour."

"Nonsense! You are trying to gain time; you can't deceive me! To think that I thought I was happy, a little happy, when I recovered you, the half of all I possess! Our town, our villages, our factory, our lands, all have been protected beyond any hope; I have got back one of my sons; I no longer have a soldier in the camp which has never been that of my race. But now my son whom I have recovered wishes to go away from me, to leave me alone!"

"Not at all! I promise not to leave you alone. Are you satisfied?"

He wore such an expression of pity, and there was so much filial love in his look, which was always a little secretive, that Madame Ehrsam, after looking at him, tried to master the doubt which tortured her, and leaned on his arm to resume the walk.

"Where would you go? To France? It can only be there."

A second time he did not reply.

"I do not urge you not to love France; I should stultify myself. But I have given her your brother, and I leave him to her. You I want to keep. Is it not fair?"

They had reached the factory gate. The young man left his mother, anxious to break off a conversation which was embarrassing him, and went toward the office, only saying to her who was following him with her eyes and trying to learn something more:

"Mamma, the only secret I have is that I feel too happy."

They went off each in their own direction, but thinking solely of each other. The mother went to her room. Sitting by the window, from where she could see the fields rising above Baerenhof, she thought:

"What a mistake I made! He saw Victor, who spoke and looked at him so contemptuously that I am not surprised that he was disturbed. I felt the irony myself, which was quite in the Alsatian manner. What plans is he making now? What mad design can be ripening in that reticent mind? He wishes to leave me; at least, he thought of leaving me. I will prevent him! I will talk to him! How clumsy he was, my poor Joseph! He thought he would reassure me by telling me that he would not leave me alone at Masevaux! Consequently he thinks of living somewhere else. And how long he hesitated before he made me that ambiguous answer! These are hard days which I awaited as the happiest of my life! There can be hardly any doubt. Joseph wishes to go to France, like his older brother; no doubt to enlist— But then,

if I try to dissuade him, as I ought to, who will back me up? Pierre, wholly taken up with Mademoiselle de Clairepée? Pierre, so proud of having been one of the first Alsatians to pass the frontier? I should be afraid of him, on the contrary, and of the young girl who belongs to a military race, and who would think it quite natural that my second son, spared for eighteen months by Polish and French bullets, should now go and throw himself before German bullets. I do not wish even to think of what my relations and friends in Masevaux would say of me at the bottom of their hearts. I am a mother who has recovered her son and defends him against himself. What is he doing now? He told me this morning that he had worked so hard these last days that he would be free during Pierre's leave. If he went back to the factory it is because my questions embarrassed him, and he is determined to make up his mind alone, alone, alone, as always, according to his prejudices, because a peasant looked askance at him, because of words which he ascribes to people passing by who said nothing, and which are the result of the imagination in this positive man. What more can I do? Nothing. And I may be mistaken myself. Perhaps he never had the plan which I attribute to him."

She smiled in spite of herself. "There remains one more hope, and I do not place it in myself. Yes, this young girl's arrival will bring Joseph

out of his gloomy ideas. If things turn out as I hope, if he sees his brother happy and—who can tell?—engaged, will he not think that he has only to will it to have a like happiness given him? How many young girls do I know who would welcome the suit which we would make, he and I? There would be no more doubt, with Joseph engaged and married; we should remain here, both of us, awaiting the end of the war, and Pierre's return, and the complete deliverance of Alsace."

Joseph, leaning over the fire covered with black dust in which blue flames were fluttering, in the workroom which he had arranged for himself at the end of the old building, was thinking at the same moment and making up his mind:

"I have decided. I will not bear Victor Reinhardt's contempt, nor my butcher's, nor my old workmen's, nor Pierre's any longer. I have proved, I think, that I am not a coward, for the danger is equal on both sides. But here the proof does not count unless it is gained in the French army. Pierre has done his duty; I have not done mine, it appears. I thought, when I obeyed the law of those masters whom I did not love, that I should save the fortune of my whole family, all that the elders had laboriously amassed, built, organized. My sacrifice was useless. I was mistaken by ten kilometers; the little district fell into the hands of the French at the beginning. After being treated as an enemy by those Germans

who after all saw clearly, I escaped from them. And to-day I am a sort of man without a country, neither German nor French, hateful to everybody because he serves nobody but himself and because our blood does not belong to us ourselves, but to ideas. Very good; I understand. I will choose my time, which will not be long. From now on I shall get everything ready, as my friends at Thann advised me to."

He touched the button of the electric bell. The door opened. "Send Monsieur Denner here."

A man came in, thin, with white hair, a quick manner, dressed in an old frock-coat, who was like an old family doctor, coming up to the invalid, looking at him from as far as he could see him, already questioning him by his half-smile:

"Well? You sent for me. It is nothing serious, I suppose. I am quite at your service, my dear sir. What is it?"

It was the last survivor of the collaborators of Louis Pierre Ehrsam, the counselor of the two sons and of the widow, the holder of the power of attorney, the former codirector of the factory, the faithful friend.

"My dear Denner, I am going to tell you a secret, before anybody else."

"I have been told a great many, Monsieur Joseph, since the time—"

"Sit down beside me. That's right. I wish to tell you that I have resolved, to begin with, to leave Masevaux and enlist in the French army."

Denner, who was sitting on the edge of his chair, stood up, so violent was the nervous shock which he received from such a piece of news, told without preparation. He remained absorbed for an instant, his lids fluttering on his near-sighted eyes, which were studying his master, the young captain of industry, sunk in the green-leather chair, with his legs crossed, his hands clasped and leaning on the arms of the chair.

"You will be here, Denner, and, besides, some one will take my place."

"You are thinking of Madame Ehrsam. I understand. Poor lady, she hoped to rest!"

"She can continue to do so."

"Still—"

"Don't try to make objections. I have thought of everything."

The employee shook his head.

"I know, Monsieur Joseph, that your ideas have always been carefully thought out and that there is not much to change when you have a plan. It is the pain that I feel which makes me speak."

"It pains me, too, but my resolution is fixed. Besides, I shall not leave you and my mother alone. I called you precisely that you might help me to get my brother back to Masevaux."

"You think that possible?"

"It is already done. Here everything depends on the will of the Minister of War. I have secured powerful friends who will support my request.

And my request, Denner, will be based on two strong arguments. First, my enlistment in the French service. I am not subject to military service. They concluded at Paris that they ought to treat the men of our valleys considerately, the few who are left. Consequently I shall have this argument made to the Minister:

"Joseph is enlisting; he wishes to fight in the army where Pierre has fought. Let Pierre go. Soldier for soldier, what does it matter to you?"

Denner rubbed his hands, which often worried him on account of writer's cramp.

"They have none too many; they do not let them go without important reasons."

"I will add a second. As soon as I knew that my brother was coming home on leave I prepared a petition which will be presented by one of my friends to the Minister of Commerce. The people who work in the factory, you, first of all, my dear Denner, then the heads of workrooms, the foremen and forewomen, will explain to the Minister that such a business as ours, by which they live, by which they gain their bread, which is one of the factors of the town's prosperity, cannot be carried on, during such a war as this, the end of which cannot be seen, unless it is carried on by a young and consequently a bold man. Excuse me for saying this, for having written it—"

"But it is true, Monsieur Joseph! I think as you do. An employee like me, even if you

call him director, must be afraid to risk somebody else's capital. And if he is not afraid, I say that he is not worthy of the confidence which you have shown me."

"We will also point out that our cotton-factories are working for France, almost as much as the munitions-factories, and that to ask an Alsatian house to make a place for ourselves in the French market, which is entirely new to us, and at the same time to take away the two responsible heads, would be to commit an economic mistake and undoubtedly a political blunder."

"Very good; but would Monsieur Pierre accept?"

"I have very serious reasons for believing that he would. The text of the petition, which I shall give you, Denner, and which will be attached to my request, will not contain any proper name. Those who sign it can imagine that it concerns me, and that it has been simply the desire to keep me at the head of the factory. Above all, say nothing to my brother if you see him to-day."

"You may count on me."

"I want to confront him with something which is done and cannot be undone, against which eloquence, entreaties, and argument are in vain."

Joseph took a bunch of keys out of his pocket, rose, opened the door of a cupboard built along the wall, and handed Denner a large double sheet on the first page of which he had written a few lines.

"Here, this is the petition. Will you have the goodness to have it passed around the shops?"

"With pleasure, Monsieur Joseph. I shall have no trouble in getting signatures. To do a service to an Ehrsam, you know—the stupid part of it is that we cannot have one without losing the other."

"Good-by, and thank you, Denner. When you have got all the signatures, leave it on my table, here. I cannot tell when I shall make use of it."

"It will be finished by this evening."

Joseph pressed the hands which Denner held out to him; then, when he was alone, he began to walk up and down the room, tapping the panes with the ends of his fingers each time that he reached one of the two windows, before turning round to go in the opposite direction. Without realizing it, perhaps, he felt as though he was starting on a journey. He was already separated from his family; he had spoken words which he would not retract.

"The news will be known to-morrow, and those who are jealous of me will be obliged to do me justice. Henceforth they can say nothing in fairness against me. I have passed sentence on myself. I have still twenty-four hours' time to make acquaintance with the face and the cackle of this Provençale, and to see the dear brother whom I might have killed before Rheims and who might also have put me in a condition where I could not have replaced him in the French

army. Mamma, who complains that I take too little share in the family gatherings, will see me present, this time, at all the preliminary stages of the engagement. My poor Joseph, your best rôle is not that of a man of society! You may not talk much, but you will listen. You are so accustomed to pass for a dolt! The beautiful Provençale will say: 'He is timid, isn't he! He says so little!' But to-morrow night they will be sorry I have gone. Perhaps they will even bless this Joseph who will have freed his older brother—my Pierre! I do not want to stand the brunt of his objections, his futile refusals, and to vie with him in generosity. 'Take my place in the factory!'—'No, you stay!'—'You!'—'You, I say!' No, silence on that subject! My brother will know nothing of my decision. I shall appear to be a good fellow, contented to be happy and pacific. But I will learn from him what he thinks of France, down at the bottom of his heart. When one is going to live in a country the most elementary prudence demands that he should know what sort of men he is going to live among. He will tell me, and he has had no cause to praise his new fellow-citizens, it seems. I know almost all the accusations which he has brought against them in his letters. When I have repeated them to him I will see what remains of the anger of this man who has already been considered more intelligent than I. At any rate, he is easier to pump. How is it that he is not here? Half

past eleven—wagons come from Belfort every morning to bring the mail for the Masevaux authorities—"

Joseph was putting his watch back in his vest pocket when M. Denner knocked on the door, which he partly opened.

"Monsieur Pierre is coming! He wants to come into the factory to say good morning to everybody. I have had a telephone message from Madame Ehrsam."

"Well, let him come."

Joseph did not leave his office, thinking it unnecessary that his employees should be present at the first meeting of the two brothers. Through his whole life he had been faithful to one of his maxims: "I never play to the gallery." Touched, pleased with the murmur which he soon heard, then with the words which reached him, he waited till Pierre had received the compliments of the clerks, the cashier, the three typewriters, of Denner, whose respectful voice never stopped saying:

"Certainly the war agrees with you, Monsieur Pierre. How well you look! And your uniform! Ah, it is a real French officer!"

The door opened and Pierre came in.

Joseph was behind the door. The two brothers embraced, stepped back a pace, shook hands, not knowing how to show the pleasure they both had at being there, at home, after so many months, and after passing through so many perils.

"Come to the window, Pierre, that I may see you better!"

As he spoke, Joseph brought two chairs up to the window, from which they could see the house.

"Sit down opposite me, in a good light. Do you know, you look well."

"You, too; in fact, you are fatter. So the Boches fed you well?"

"Not so badly as people said—I feel like adding Herr Lieutenant."

"Oh no! We say Mon Lieutenant. It is much more chic; it means, 'You command me, but you are my friend; if you are worthy of your stripes you are a bond between the soldiers, some one who belongs to everybody, to whom one can say "my."' You are a *Fähnrich*, they tell me."

"Yes, from compulsion. That is why I deserted."

"That alone?"

"Understand, I could not order my men to fire on the French, being an Alsatian."

"Could you fire at them as a soldier?"

Joseph's placid face became hard.

"We never did it, I or my Alsatian comrades. I don't play the hero, but I followed out my own idea. We put our sights at five hundred meters when they were thirty meters away."

"I am glad to see you angry, old man. We are like each other."

"You are you, and I am I, but we have one thing in common, our hatred of Germany."

"Increased by fifteen months of military life?"

"So much that I can't bear to see them or hear them. There certainly must be something in this nation—"

"Which?"

"France—something very powerful—"

"Mysterious—"

"Still more—"

"You are right. Let us finish the Litany of France; something almost divine."

"Something divine, indeed, to make those who, like me, have been impressed with its spirit without suspecting it, incapable of being duped by the appearances of civilization of the other country, Germany."

Pierre looked at him affectionately, like an older brother who does not wish to seem surprised at a change for the better, and yet wishes to show that he recognizes it.

"Well," he went on, "you ought to like the air of Alsace now."

"It is exquisite."

"Rest?"

"Yes."

"Silence?"

"Oh yes, still more! Would not you be happy to live as I do?"

Pierre looked out of the window, toward the house.

"It is the dream of every minute in which I can dream; home, Alsace; it is a kind of Paradise. But it must be bought with the greatest price which men can pay. Our comrades from here are dying. They are winning for those who survive this air of Alsace, or Burgundy, or Provence, or Languedoc, or Brittany. Yes, I hope to come back here, but not till I have deserved it."

Without replying to what wounded him in Pierre's speech, Joseph answered, pointing to the partition which separated them from the employees, then to the buildings of the factory all about them:

"There was need for me to come back. Remember what I am going to say to you—it is absolutely necessary for one of the two masters to be on the watch here. Our dear mother has done all that she could, and Denner is an honest soul, but neither a woman nor an employee can manage so many workmen, buy, sell, look ahead."

"So that you will wait here for the end of the war?"

"I don't know. It will be long, doubtless?"

"No, Joseph, it will be short if you consider the immensity of the victory to be gained, and the noise which the German Empire will make in crumbling."

Joseph slapped his thigh. "Still the same imagination which carries you away! Crumble? The German Empire?"

"None of our people question it."

"You are surer of that than I am. You have not had such a close view of the power of Germany. I remember that you once told me that I did not know France. You, certainly, do not know the monster against whom you are fighting. But supposing that France is victorious, shall we Alsatians be happy? I mean altogether happy."

"Yes."

"Yet you questioned it."

"That is true; but seeing the people and the army of France closely, a great hope revived in me, and now I am certain."

"The conquerors will understand us? You think that? Louis XVI treated us like a great-hearted man; he did not begin by counting the votes of the electors, he knew what was for the common interest. But who represents the common interest in France?"

Pierre did not reply.

"We shall be obliged to make a new clientèle for our factory."

"So much the worse at first, so much the better later."

"We shall be the victims of an antiquated administration."

"Very well, we will lead the chorus of those who are dissatisfied, which means, on this occasion, the men of progress. Our institutions, our charitable foundations, our customs, will be preserved."

"Shall I tell you what I dread most of all since my return?"

"Tell me."

"I am afraid they will ruin the souls of our children, as they have their own. Can you fancy our Brothers of Mary driven from Alsace; our nuns of Ribeauville, who have so many schools? Our good Alsatian school-teachers, who are far from being atheists, and who have kept the crucifix in the place of honor? So long as it suspects this, the soul of Alsace lives between love and fear. Ah, brother Pierre, except in your case, the Alsatian, for all his good-natured look, is skeptical. Suppose it were true, what the Germans have always told us, that we were to be persecuted because of our religion when we are reunited to France?"

"No, the French will not welcome us with this present."

"Suppose they did? We have held out against the Boches for forty-seven years; we would hold out a hundred against those who threatened our faith!"

"There will be no need; they have given their word—the President, Joffre, others, important men."

"You would trust their word?"

"These, yes; it is France who spoke. You might remind me of the persecutions carried on by the men who lead it. I know, I know. Don't worry unnecessarily. They did wrong, they did not understand their own country, but they have not decatholicized it any more than the Germans

unfrenched the Alsatians. I grew to know France little by little, and, as always happens to strangers, I first saw that which is not the true one. You have seen how France fights; if you could only see how she prays and gives! You will do her justice some day; you will even give up this idea that France is lucky to get us Alsatians and Lorrains back."

"Yet you said it often enough! How many times have I heard that song! You are giving yourself the lie!"

"I am correcting myself. There is some truth in it, but the greatest truth is that Alsace and Lorraine will be too happy to find once more the heart of France, in which live the words of life eternal."

"What?"

"I believe in God!"

"Still an enthusiast!"

"Yes, I am, because I have come to understand her whom the nations have regarded as a purveyor of fashions and pleasures, and who is, in truth, simply a virtuous woman ill married. And then, you see, France is triumphing, is going to return to her historical path; she is designed to fight what is brutish and to restore what is ideal. I do not say that the French will not quarrel any more, but victory will change the subjects of their quarrels."

Joseph did not answer; he was studying his brother with that passionate attention which he

brought to the handling of a business matter, to the study of an adversary. Although he might have defended himself till the end, he was too deeply affected by meeting Pierre after a long separation, and even, perhaps chiefly, by hearing him speak in a tone of such certainty, that nothing showed on his face, under control like that of an Englishman. He brightened up; his mustache, which usually melted into his beard, rose like a blond portcullis and showed his teeth. He thought:

"So much the better! What I resolve to do I can now do with a good will. I shall go to France as my father went."

Pierre did not see him. He had lifted the muslin curtain and was looking at the factory yard, at the roads of pounded coal, and at the Ehrsam house at the end which was waiting for him, to which he would come back some day, after how long? With Marie or without her? And for what sort of future? He was surprised to hear Joseph saying behind him, in a voice like that of old times, when they used to play together:

"Brother Pierre, when is Mademoiselle de Clairepée coming?"

"Ah, you know!"

"Mamma is accustomed to tell us everything; unfortunately, I am not accustomed to imitate her."

Pierre drew close to his brother.

"You will see her this evening. Very soon! I

dare not believe it is true! Mademoiselle Marie will stop with our friend in the market-place. We are invited to dinner. She will stay only two days."

"How you say only! Two days in these years are no small thing! The world might be changed before the end of the second."

"You have really become another man, Joseph!"

"You think so?"

"A philosopher!"

"I have always been one, more or less. Don't let us talk about me. You lovers are the only interesting people."

"But I am not sure that she loves me enough to consent to live here. I have had no news from L'Abadié for five months, and I have had only one letter from her, and that a note in which she told me that she had decided never to marry."

"She has changed her mind, that is all."

"No, you cannot judge her yet. She is of too lofty an excellence not to demand from him who is to marry her some unusual and difficult condition. I feel it, and suffer because of it."

"Rejoice, on the contrary. She did not undertake this long journey for my sake or my mother's; and yet I assure you that we are very happy at this visit."

He added, turning away his blue eyes, "You must have seen it when you went into the house."

"No, mamma is not so happy as I expected. She seemed worried to me."

"Is she not always worried?"

"What you say is pretty; you must repeat it to Mademoiselle Marie."

"Oh, don't count on me for compliments! I am still uncivilized. I will tell you what I think of her, you alone, in confidence."

"Yes, old friend, me alone, since you would rather. Come, let us get the family together over there; some one is waiting for us."

Arm in arm the two brothers left the office and went across the courtyard. Madame Ehrsam watched them coming as she stood on the door-step.

"How happy it makes me that you are like this! It is a marvel for two brothers to meet during this war."

"It is greater in our case than in any other, for we set out in opposite directions."

As Pierre said this he kissed his mother. He said in her ear: "How he has changed! He has taken a horror of Germany, which he never loved."

"Admirable!"

"He even conjugated with me the verb 'to love France.'"

His mother started, and as Joseph passed them and went into the house she said to Pierre, very quickly: "Keep silent on that subject! Don't speak to him about it!"

"What are you saying?"

"Not too much."

"Why?"

"Because you might cause me a great sorrow, my child."

He looked at her for a moment, hesitated, took her hand and they went in.

It was a happy afternoon for the two brothers and their mother. Pierre wanted to go into every room in the house, as schoolboys do on the first day of their vacations, his room and his brother's, the study, the garrets, from which they could see the mountain slopes over the walls of the yard and the trees, the kitchen, finally the red drawing-room, which Anna had spent the morning in airing, sweeping, dusting, polishing. The sofa, the chairs, the arm-chairs, placed in a circle, appeared quite new, so well had the rosewood and the stamped cotton-velvet been preserved under the coverings and in the dark. Penelope, half reclining, dressed with strict decency, wearing rather long sandals, continued to spin her distaff-full of golden fleece, on the block of green marble on which the clock stood. They were poor things which they had loved, like Madame Ehrsam's earrings, like the brooch which she never wore any longer, like the engagement ring which she still wore. Pierre asked himself:

"What will Mademoiselle de Clairepée say?"

A little later he took a walk in the town with his mother and brother. The mother, between her two tall sons, enjoyed this walk amazingly. She was saluted by every one whom she met, whether they were workmen or bourgeoisie, by

the shopkeepers who half opened their doors and said, speaking for the family assembled at the back of the shop:

"Poor lady! She is happy to-day; she has her two sons with her."

Children stopped playing—they were playing soldier, of course—and, drawn up in line, at the command of one of them raised their hands to their right temples, with the palms outward to the winter sun.

"It is Madame Ehrsam's son; he is a sub-lieutenant in the army, you see his stripe. He is the first of our men who has risen so high. Salute, boys!"

The hours flew faster than any which Madame Ehrsam had lived for several years. It reminded her of the old strolls on Sundays, between Pierre and Joseph, like to-day, when she went down the Doller toward the "Rock of the Little Duke Maso," or walked up the valley, bordered with workmen's houses or with villas which are drawn a little back in their orchards. They did not talk about the war, and the mother felt less anxious than in the morning, for Joseph enjoyed listening to his brother. Those who saw their happiness could have repeated what they had formerly said:

"Our friends' sons are a whole play by themselves; the dark one speaks the words and makes gestures and the blond one laughs at him."

They returned home at nightfall and dressed

for dinner. They had been told when they reached the factory that Mademoiselle de Clairepée had been in Masevaux for an hour, and that the ladies were waiting for them.

At six o'clock they entered a *salon* which was more elegant than the Ehrsams', in which were tastefully arranged numerous paintings or engravings, portraits of authentic ancestors, bourgeoisie of old Alsace, landscapes of the neighborhood, popular prints of the time of Napoleon, crosses of Saint Louis or of the Legion of Honor, inclosed in valuable frames, above which a legend said that the decoration had been worn by "my uncle" or "my father" or "my great-grandfather," of Masevaux, of Guebwiller, of Colmar, of Strasbourg. The mistress of the house came in almost immediately, followed by Mademoiselle de Clairepée, who was in mourning. Marie greeted Madame Ehrsam, whose heart beat quickly, but who thought again, when she saw her, as she had thought at St.-Baudile:

"I have nothing to fear from this one."

Then, immediately afterward: "What a poor, sorrowful smile! How the young people of to-day have suffered!"

"Madame," said Marie, "here I am at Masevaux. You were right to write. It is a visit which could not have been made at any other time."

"And which I should not have dared to ask of any one but you."

"Do you know what induced me to come?"

"A memory, I hope."

"A word of yours. You said in your letter, 'I am unhappy.' In these days we have the habit of going to those who are unhappy— I think it was that."

She held out her hand to Pierre, who said, "It seems to me that I hear you in the drawing-room at L'Abadié, mademoiselle—"

"Poor Abadié! You would not know it. It used to be a house in which people laughed. Things have changed. If you had known my Hubert you would understand—"

"I do understand; I have met him."

She gave him a swift, questioning look.

"Yes, they are all alike, those men who are dying for France. But I do not wish to show my sorrow here. I do not want you to find too much difference between what I was and what I am. Present me to your brother; we have already talked about him more than once."

Pierre presented Joseph, who did not find a word to reply. The little circle formed about this daughter of Provence, who brought her new grace, and as it were a new language, into this old Alsatian house. They all listened to her with delight because she talked very well, without any affectation, and about things which they knew or which they could imagine. She was not one of those who try to astonish people. It would have been easy for her to choose subjects which would have made her shine. She chose the

simplest, the journey from St.-Baudile to Belfort, her entrance into Alsace, the history of the valley and of these families, which everything recalled here, and whose fidelity to the King, the Emperor, to France always, had a meaning which was fuller here than elsewhere, and was often heroic. Madame Ehrsam and her friend, Pierre, even Joseph, replied to her questions. No one made any effort. She did not drag them violently out of their habits. They said to themselves, each at the bottom of his heart, "A great deal of kindness is needed for so much cleverness." Consequently, the hour of dinner and the evening were passed as in a family. The hostess, whose reserved character rendered her almost incapable of hasty judgments, said twice in Madame Ehrsam's ear, "It seems to me that this young girl is one of our own."

One might almost have thought that it was a time of peace. Only, once in a while the distant rumbling of cannon in the Vosges, or some incident told by the young officer of chasseurs, recalled the war, the farewells, the mourning, the extreme fragility of the love projects which others had formed, "Where will he be to-morrow?"

Toward the end of the evening Marie de Clairepée, seated at a table, was turning over the leaves of the marvelous collection of the *Revue Alsacienne Illustrée*. Pierre, leaning over the left of her chair, was adding a word of explanation to the pictures or the inscriptions.

He said, very low, "I thank you for the greatest happiness of my life."

Then she, in whom there was no deceit, answered without looking at him, and continuing to turn the pages which she no longer saw:

"It seemed to me that in coming here I, too, was doing my duty in the war. You sent beautiful letters to L'Abadié; you said in them more than one thing which touched me; I could not write it to you as I should have liked; I came to say it to you. Only—"

"Why do you not stop there?"

"No, let us be quite frank. I came, above all, in order to know you better; do not ask anything more of me. I do not know where we are going; I should not have sufficient freedom of will to dispose of myself—"

As Pierre was starting to return to the factory with his mother and Joseph, in the cold wind which blew from the east, he asked:

"Well, Joseph?"

"Ah, my friend, bring her home and persuade her to remain there always! Do you know what she is like? The most beautiful statue which I ever saw, the most lovely, the tenderest—"

"Ah, how beautiful!"

"She is like the Eve in the cathedral at Rheims!"

"Tell that to Mademoiselle de Clairepée."

"I never should dare. I am uncouth. My compliments are like hares in confinement—always

at the back of the hutch. Perhaps I may try to-morrow."

He said nothing more, but Madame Ehrsam and Pierre understood that he had been won, and were delighted.

The next day, Thursday, Madame Ehrsam had risen early because she was to have Mademoiselle de Clairepée to luncheon, and in small towns having guests to a meal is a great affair. She went from the kitchen to the dining-room, from the dining-room to the *salon*, and was surprised that Anna was still detained in the bedrooms making them up. A military band began to play on the road to Rougemont. Joseph, who was about to start down-stairs, and was already crossing the landing, went into a guest-chamber from which one could see to right and left of the porter's lodge two long stretches of the road to France. Anna was at the window, standing on a chair, leaning forward, with arms outstretched, pushing back against the wall the windows which she had just opened.

He came up without her hearing him. She said, aloud, "There is the Remiremont band; there is the general!"

The general passed, a little African, determined-looking, mounted on a white horse. Then came the Moroccans, men with bronzed faces, dressed in yellow; they marched like felines, who have more spring than is necessary for the step; the guns of the same rank did not form a straight

line. They filed past, company after company. A new group of officers appeared between the trees, then soldiers in blue uniforms, who felt that they were being looked at, whom the honor of the profession kept in line, and gave a proud look, a troop of soldiers who had become ambassadors from the old country to a recovered city which they now must win over. Anna cried out:

"Our people! Our people!"

She called this with so heartfelt expression that Joseph was stirred by it. He drew back without her suspecting that she had been seen or heard.

"How did that girl, who knows hardly anything but Alsatian, discover that expression, 'Our people!' There is no Alsace; there is only an Alsatian France! You yourself, Joseph, can say, especially since yesterday, since Mademoiselle de Clairepée passed before your eyes, you can say, like this servant, that those who go from here to France have returned home, and that those who come from France to Masevaux have not left their own country."

He met his mother at the foot of the stairs, and was annoyed by it.

"Are you going to the review, Joseph?"

"No, I have some work to finish. You know, with us what we think finished never is. I have some letters to write."

"Are you going to leave Pierre? This morning?"

"I shall breakfast with you."

"Oh!" she thought, when she had kissed him

and had watched him down the path hammered and hollowed by the feet of the workmen, "there he is with his crazy ideas again. I am sure—I thought of it last night—that this visit of Mademoiselle de Clairepée has turned his head. He fancies that he will find Marie de Clairepées over there by the dozen. He wants to go away from here, and yet it is toward her that he is going. He looked at her last night as at a vision. He scarcely dared to speak to her, but if he had dared he would have said:

"'The country from which you come is the most beautiful in the world—'

"Poor child, whom they consider rough, and who is tender to excess! The things about which his brother is enthusiastic have no hold on this man, who is put on the defensive by any attempt at persuasion, but a look, a movement made with a grace which is evidently rare, a courteous word spoken in a beautiful, captivating voice, melts his heart. They are all alike! Even into their love of country there enters the love of women!"

Still, she remained at the house, busy with her housekeeping. Pierre, who was surprised at not yet having seen his brother, had gone to visit a friend, and then to ask leave of the military authorities to go in the afternoon with his mother and Mademoiselle de Clairepée to the top of the Buchberg, from which they could see the German trenches. He came back about eleven o'clock. Madame Ehrsam, having telephoned in vain,

was going at that moment into the door of the central building in which the offices of the factory were, and there she met Denner.

"What is my son doing, that he should be in your office for the last two hours?"

"He is writing, madame."

"What?"

"Letters, letters, I don't quite know what; I do not permit myself—"

"Monsieur Denner, you are concealing something serious from me. I see it in your eyes! It is not right! You whom I trust!"

She looked so unhappy that the employee could not keep the secret. He closed the door, and there, in the passage, on the worn mat, standing by his mistress, he replied:

"You know something?"

"Almost nothing."

"No, no, dear lady, do not turn pale like that. Do not be unhappy. Monsieur Joseph thinks of going to France, to enlist there."

"I have done all I could to prevent him."

"You see that you did know. But he does not want you to remain alone. He is a good son. He handed me a petition, which is signed now by all the employees and all the foremen; there is not one missing—"

"A petition! Signatures! What does all this mean? I want to see my son! Let me pass!"

She went quickly up the stairs, passed behind the seats of the clerks and the typewriters without

replying to the salutations which she ordinarily returned with so much cordiality, and opened the door of the director's office. Joseph rose, and, when he saw her so pale, realized that she knew everything. He stroked his blond beard with his right hand, but his eyes looked fixedly and coldly at his mother.

"You have made up your mind to go, Joseph? Don't deny it; they have told me."

"It is true."

"You are leaving Masevaux? You are going to enlist in the French army?"

"Yes."

"Consequently you lied to me yesterday morning."

"I had not decided what day I should go."

"Perhaps it was last night that you took this fine resolution?"

"Last evening."

"Very good; Mademoiselle de Clairepée, wasn't it? What did she say to you?"

"Nothing."

"They are so clever, and you are so weak! I am sure that after seeing her you swore to go and fight for the country in which she was born."

"It may be. I don't know. I do not analyze reasons and causes, like my brother."

"Your brother! Yes, there are also your brother's stories and opinions!"

"There is something more, mamma."

"What?"

"I think it is the blood of the Ehrsams stirring."

"And you will leave Masevaux? In a month? In a fortnight?"

"After breakfasting with the family."

"To-day? You dare to tell me that in three hours you will no longer be here, where you ought to be, in the factory?"

"As sure as I see you, in three hours you will not see me any more. I have engaged a place in an automobile which will take me to Thann."

He laid his hand on some letters and papers piled up at the corner of the table.

"Everything is ready."

Madame Ehrsam drew back.

"Then there is nothing for me to do but to go away."

Joseph got between her and the door.

"No, mamma, nothing can make me change; but I want to explain to you. I meant to do so, but you anticipated me."

She stood before him with her arms hanging at her sides, her eyelids lowered, motionless.

"Explain! I have already suffered through you; it will only be a little more."

"To-morrow I shall be in France, but there will also leave from Alsace for the Ministry of Commerce some papers."

"The petition, yes, I know; go on."

"The petition, and other papers. Some of my friends will explain in person to the Minister the serious reasons for which our factory cannot

be deprived of both its chiefs at the same time. As I am enlisting, I ask that Pierre be placed on indefinite leave of absence. The Minister of War will not refuse this request, made with a good motive, and strongly supported. There are precedents for it. And that is why I told you that you would not remain alone; Pierre will come back to you."

"If he consents."

"He will consent. He has fulfilled his duty toward France; he has campaigned for eighteen months without being obliged to. When he retires from the army he offers a substitute. And I offer to my brother and to her who will, I hope, soon be his wife the happiness of living here, with you—"

"The happiness which was not enough for you!"

"You are hard on me! You are a mother to the point of injustice!"

"What more have you to say?"

"That it is for you to get my brother to listen to reason. He would not accept from me the sacrifice which I am making, but when I shall have left Masevaux and no one knows where to find me, he will resign himself to being happy. To persuade him, you will have the all-powerful eloquence of Mademoiselle de Clairepée. A look from her eyes and this unconquerable creature will yield."

"You don't understand such natures as these!"

"Do not speak to them before this evening, as

late as possible. By nightfall I shall be only an unknown traveler in an overcrowded compartment; I shall not have even a name. May I write to you? Are you so angry at me that you wish to have no news of me?"

The mother raised the eyelids which she had kept lowered, and when she saw that her son was suffering she threw her arms around his neck and burst into tears.

Still, they said nothing more. Madame Ehrsam, shaken by sobs, drew gently away from Joseph, pushing him back with a gesture of her upraised hands, saying:

"Let me go! I have no more strength; say nothing more."

She wiped her eyes and looked at the corner of her house through the window. A sad smile, one of those smiles of unhappiness which mark the royalty of a soul which seems crushed, drew the silent lips a little toward the earth, and the face was illumined by a faint dawn. Resignation? Memory of a happier time? The passing picture of Pierre and Marie, whom she was going to see again? She opened the door of the employees' room, graciously returned the salutations this time, and went to sit down in her place, which had been empty for five years, on the left of the stove in the red *salon*, decorated with winter flowers and foliage.

The luncheon was well arranged, as the dinner of the night before had been; the conversation

was easier and more cordial, between the same people. Madame Ehrsam made an effort not to show the grief and the fear which increased in her as the hour approached when one of those there would rise. She and he alone knew that he would not come back. She alone fell into reveries, with her gaze fixed on vacancy. Pierre had asked her twice:

"What is the matter, mamma? Are you sad? Oh, this is not the day for that! To-morrow, perhaps, you may have the right to be, and even then, who knows? Don't be sad, mamma."

And he began to talk again with the young married woman whose husband was fighting in Champagne. Marie de Clairepée, seated next to Joseph, was asking him about the forests in the Vosges; about the Hartmannswillerkopf, which the enemy's artillery had been hammering since the day before; about the pilgrimage to Huppach, and the chapel which she was going to pass after luncheon. Joseph, as calm in appearance as usual, replied with the clearness which was customary with him. He looked at Marie, listened to her attentively, and as he laughed at everything she said, the point of his golden beard wagged above his collar.

Having looked at the clock, he suddenly became thoughtful. It was about to strike two. The guests rose, and Anna served coffee in the *salon*.

Mademoiselle de Clairepée was standing by the window; she was looking at the waste land, the

buildings of the factory, the tops of the mountains across the valley. He who was about to leave came up to her and said in an undertone:

"You have heard Pierre last night and this morning; how well he talks, doesn't he?"

"My father and I enjoyed listening to him in Provence."

"He is well informed, he divines things which he does not know, he is enthusiastic—"

"Oh yes!"

"And so good! When we met yesterday we were absolutely happy, like children; yes, mademoiselle, in these unhappy days, like children! I who am shy and awkward, as you see—"

"Less and less."

"That is true. In a little while I should not be afraid at all with you. I should like to say to you, Pierre is altogether admirable, almost worthy of you."

Turning toward him she smiled, and the smile said, "You also have a deep nature; if I chose, I could reign in this house through love."

"Mademoiselle, marry my brother and come and live here. I must speak for him now, because I can't go with you to the Buchberg. I have to go to Thann and other places. This is good-by."

"Already?"

"But I shall do something for you two which costs me a little. You will soon learn about it. If you some day condescend to be my sister you will think of it as my first wedding present."

Without waiting for her reply he went to Pierre, repeated to him that urgent business called him to the Thann valley, pressed his hand, bowed to the friend of the Place du Marché, then, coming to his mother, who sat by the stove, he gave her a long embrace. Every one had become silent. Madame Ehrsam went with her son into the anteroom; she was not absent more than a minute, but when she returned her cheeks were as pale as her hands.

"Strange fellow!" said Pierre. "He is always mysterious. I see that his journey annoys you, mamma. I hope you urged him to come back before night."

"You can understand that I said all that I could."

"I like him," said Marie.

"You are right, mademoiselle," said Pierre.

"Yes, his silence never means that he is not thinking. He is a man of few words, that is all. Where is he going?"

"I don't know. Do you, mamma?"

Madame Ehrsam only said, "I am sorry to have him go so early."

The friend from the Place du Marché, who was sensitive and easily affected, felt embarrassed in the midst of this family tragedy which she had supposed was ended and which was beginning again, and of which she did not wish to be any longer a useless witness. She excused herself from going up the Buchberg.

XVI

THE WALK TO THE BUCHBERG

THEY all went out together. Madame Ehrsam, between Marie and Pierre, when she had left her friend at the entrance to the Place, took the rue de la Mairie, crossed the bridge over the Doller, turned to the right, and took the road to Huppach.

It was a fine day. Only a few wisps of fog, floating through the sky, driven by the high wind, moved evenly and without a fold. A little snow had fallen, enough to whiten the ground, except in the woods, where it was protected by the trunks and branches of the trees.

The road ascends at first almost straight between fields planted with cherry-trees, plum-trees, apple-trees. All the view is to the right, toward the depression of the valley which narrows as it rises toward the round tops of the Petit Buchberg and the Grand Buchberg, the mountains of the Hêtre, the Vosges, on the edge of the plain, which are prolonged by others forming the wall of Alsace, and extending their forests which die

away in the distance in the cultivated fields like twisted roots, with their slopes toward the east, open to the winds of the Rhine, and covered with vines.

The travelers had soon passed the houses of the woodmen, then the village of Huppach. The road turns to the left and enters the forest. The leaves, fallen from the trees and rotted by the winter, turned all the hillsides purple. Pierre admired Marie, who walked so well, and who was delighted by this new spectacle of the fresh, fertile mountain, covered with tall trees. They passed above the chapel built on a hillside, to the right, then they reached a little defile, where they left the road to ascend to the top of the Grand Buchberg. A narrow path winds between thickets mixed with firs, and soon climbs a stiff incline. Two soldiers leading a loaded mule entered the wood ahead of Pierre. They saluted the officer as they passed.

"You are going up, Lieutenant?"

"Yes."

"With the ladies? They will be the first who have been up since the war began."

"I have a pass."

"All right, then. Happily, it is not here as it is at the Viel Armand. We were there yesterday; it was not pleasant. Do you hear the gallop?"

Indeed, the cannonade was violent in the distance. The noise of it came through the corridors of the Vosges to this mother who was

thinking of the old or recent trials; of others which might come; of Joseph, who was already far from her; of what she would be obliged to tell in a little while, when the night began to fall.

At the point where the path divides, where the rise toward the Buchberg becomes steeper, Pierre and Marie had gone ahead; there was not room for three people abreast.

"You will see a little of the war," said Pierre. "Here we are on the frontiers of the narrow strip of Alsace which has been recovered. It is good that it should be the last picture which you carry away; it is the truest. You will have left Masevaux to-morrow?"

"My father, Maurice, Marine, the hospital, everything calls me back."

"There are others here who wished to please you and keep you here."

"Why do you say that, and so unjustly?"

"I have not been able to make you love me."

"Should I be here if I did not love you?"

"I blame nobody but myself; but I am unhappy."

"And I came to make you happy!"

"You refuse to promise."

"By and by, I told you, by and by. Do not let us waste our last hours."

They stooped together to pass under some branches covered with snow, which flew away in dust.

"By and by? What will time do against me?

Beautiful as you are, how many will try to win you from me when I am not there? Talk to you? Say things which I have not thought of?"

Marie began to laugh. Cannon-shots shook the echoes and rolled from mountain to mountain. Neither Marie nor Pierre seemed to have heard them.

"You think very well of what is necessary for you to say, I assure you."

"Then what ought I to do to deserve you? Do you know what I think? That you are like those beautiful women of old times who could only be won by some startling exploit—by killing a monster, crossing the sea to deliver the tomb of Christ, bringing back the sword of a conquered knight."

"Were they wrong?"

"You see!"

"There are moments in life when the whole soul reveals itself at a stroke. I do not ask anything of the sort. I am still confused by grief. But time by itself is a test. You will write me, I will answer you frankly and freely. We shall soon have no secrets from each other; and you may be sure of this: the day when I hold out my hand to you it will mean, 'Pierre Ehrsam, I am yours forever; I will be the daughter of your mother, I will be the sister of your brother Joseph, and I will live in Alsace.'"

"God grant it!"

"Wait! Oh, look! an airplane!"

"A Boche airplane!"

They all three stopped in the path. Between the naked branches they could see for an instant at a great height an airplane passing rapidly through the sky, surrounded by little white clouds, the smoke of the shells fired by the Vosges batteries. Then everything disappeared. The wind blew, laden with the odor of the red leaves, of pine-needles, and perhaps, already, of sap starting.

Pierre and Marie walked on, and the mother allowed them to go ahead again.

"Here is the wind of the height," said Pierre; "we are getting near the post."

"Where is the battery which is firing at the airplane?"

"On the other slope of the mountain."

One of the sentinels, hearing the noise, came down some meters and called out, "Halt!"

He called the sergeant, who came calmly, examined the pass, and, pleased at having some change, began to act as guide to Marie de Clairepée, whom he took by the hand.

"This way, mademoiselle. Take care; it is good for us and the mules; we never clear away the underbrush, for fear of being seen. Lean here; step on the big stone. See, here is the entrance to our dugout. It's a pity we have nothing to offer you."

"Do the Boches fire at the shelter?" asked Pierre.

"They have not for two months, Lieutenant.

They would like to know where we are. The bird which was flying by just now must have been trying to find our address, too. But how is he going to find out our street and our number?"

On the side of the mountain, and almost at the top, the ground had been gashed between the thick trees, the bushes, and the forest vines. A winding ditch, whose talus rose steeply and was supported by upright posts and boards, opened into a subterranean shelter. Marie, Pierre, and Madame Ehrsam did not go into it, but climbed up a few steps of a ladder.

"Don't show yourself, Lieutenant, for you are tall. They can see very well with their telescopes. Come, mademoiselle, place yourself here behind the trees; and you, too, madame. A pretty view, isn't it?"

Between the tops of a number of young pines which grew below they could all see the white and green table-cloth of the plain of Alsace, which was bounded, far, very far away, by mist.

"The promised land!" said Marie.

"The land where there has been so much weeping!" said Madame Ehrsam.

"The land where they have never ceased to fight!" said Pierre. "She has always been on the watch; she has always been in danger; nothing can reach the heart of France without first striking here."

"The Marches of France," said Marie.

"This time they have suffered less because of

the many sacrifices they have made, because the two captives are to return to the fatherland with their faces unmarred, in order that justice may appear more resplendent."

"Still, how about the forest at our feet?"

"The headless pines, the trunks without any branches, and the marks of fire in the heather? What of that? I have seen the forests in the Argonne, in Champagne, in Artois, in Flanders. Some of them, hundreds of years old, gave the bodies and the arms of their trees to warm our soldiers and to build saps. Others were felled by cannon, like the cities, and nothing remains but the exposed roots and shoots a year old, with a leaf on the end. Others have been carried into captivity by the Boches. The sap of the soil of France has worked for the barbarian. Look farther on, beyond the slopes."

"The plain. How big it is! Where are our people?"

"Wherever you see houses there are hearts which belong to us. Look, just before you, those rose-colored roofs in the grass. That is Bourbach-le-Bas; to the right, under the great spur of pines, is Sentheim; farther on is Guewenheim, where the Doller spreads its mirrors of water."

"And all down there, these little gray designs on the meadows, like vines with their stakes?"

"German trenches, and network of barbed wire."

"It goes straight, mademoiselle," said the sergeant. "Follow my finger; straight to Cernay, well to the left, where the lines turn. Still farther there is the forest of Nonnenbruch, where the potash-pits are. And on the horizon, level with the sky, those pale sticks standing up in the mist are the chimneys of Mulhouse."

"Lost Mulhouse!" said Madame Ehrsam.

"We will recover it!" said Pierre.

"They are still firing from Heimsbrunn," said the sergeant. "Do you hear? Boum! Boum! But it is not for us, mademoiselle. I see that you are brave. So, stop where you are. Look there! toward Burnhaupt-le-Bas, a brown spot. The wood is French. It is called the Buchwald, and I spent more than a week there. I know the names of all the works; on the outskirts, Rambouillet, Pontoise, Versailles, Carcassonne, then, in the interior, Suresnes, St.-Germain, Poissy, Chatou, and the great fort, Jeanne d'Arc. Let the Boches rub up against them!"

Pierre stretched out his arms and, pointing to the whole plain, said: "The promised land, as you say, O Marie de Clairepée, and it will all be restored to us! We have suffered too much not to be together, all of us, with those whom we love. Do not believe those who call Alsace forgetful. They insult her. They do not know. Crowds will come out of all the villages which you see."

"Singing."

"They will come to meet our victorious soldiers.

The hearts in their breasts, the bells in their steeples, will ring Alleluia."

"Bravo, Lieutenant!" cried the sergeant.

"Bravo!" cried two men behind them.

"The women and the young girls will have bows of our colors on their dresses. They will sing and dance, and embrace the liberators of Alsace."

"Thanks, pretty ones!"

"And a beautiful thing is a creature which does not know how to express its joy. But the joy of a whole rescued people, happy he who shall behold it! I should like to be one of the first to enter Mulhouse, here, or Colmar, or Strasbourg!"

Marie's voice replied, "You shall be, and so shall I!"

"They will come from all over Alsace, our strong girls, dark or blond, with their holiday dresses out of the wardrobes. Those from Geispolsheim, which is south of Strasbourg, with dresses and head-dresses of red; those from Hagebau will have red skirts and aprons of blue silk; Turkheim Valfleuri will wear green gowns and big black ribbons with light borders; the girls from Wissembourg will put on their black miters, and those from Meistratsheim the fluted gold lace which makes an aureole for them."

"They will be present at the new consecration of France! Let them come! God grant it!"

The others were silent; their minds were all looking into the future. A flock of ten ring-doves

flew through the golden air above the forest on their way to their roost.

"Now," said Pierre, "I am going back to where the fighting is."

And the charm which held the spectators motionless was broken.

Madame Ehrsam, Marie, Pierre, went back through the covered path in silence, regained the other, which ran around the Buchberg, and reached the pass, then the road. Their thoughts were sad, yet they were not thinking of the same things.

In the broader road which runs down toward Masevaux, Madame Ehrsam walked to the right of Marie and Pierre. The night was coming on. The shadow was already blue in the hollow of the valley, while the clouds wandering in the sky and the trees on the tops borrowed its rich purple from the dying sun. Where was Joseph at that moment? In France certainly. The secret could be revealed. It ought to be. To-morrow these young people, Pierre and Marie, who scarcely exchanged a word, having their hearts already full of farewells, would be separated by immense distances.

When they had reached the point where the road turns and looks down on a wood on a steep hillside, then on the meadows in which is built the chapel of Huppach, the mother stopped, looked down at the white façade and the open-work belfry.

"If you like, we will go in for a little while. The moment is more serious than you think, my children."

She had said "my children" without weighing her words. Marie thanked her with a nod and a smile, then she became anxious and turned pale because Madame Ehrsam had taken Pierre's hand and said:

"Pierre, I promised not to speak till night came. Now I am going to tell you a piece of news."

"Is it good?"

"No."

"As usual."

"You will not find Joseph at the house."

"Where is he?"

"Very far from us."

"He has gone—"

"To France, to enlist in the army."

"Ah, that's splendid! He began wrong, now he is with us."

"Pierre, listen to me. He arranged everything before he went away; he applied to influential friends in the Thann valley—"

"What for? To back up his request? It was not necessary."

"No, it was not useless; Joseph knows that the presence of one of my sons is necessary at Masevaux for our business and our workmen, for me, who can no longer bear so many emotions. He arranged everything so that when he enlisted you could come back to me—"

"What an idea!"

"Listen to me a moment! Oh, do not answer quickly! I beg, you do not speak; wait till I have told you everything! Understand what he wanted. As you came back to Alsace, having done your full duty, Mademoiselle de Clairepée would not refuse to come with you, I think, and then—it would mean happiness for us three."

As she said this she burst into tears.

Pierre pressed his weeping mother in his arms. He smoothed the hair which escaped from her widow's cap and covered her temples. Then he said, very gently:

"What you ask of me is not worthy of me or of her."

As he said this he turned toward Mademoiselle de Clairepée. And his eyes met Marie's, smiling and tender, which thanked him.

"Come, the moment is more serious than we thought," he said.

Supporting his mother in the rough path which led to the chapel, followed by Marie, they crossed the stepping-stones in the brook, they passed before the three cherry-trees which are in line before the door, and went in. Marie knelt beside Pierre, on the right, while Madame, bending over the back of a bench on the other side of the aisle, wept and prayed, motionless.

They were there, Pierre and Marie, beneath the blue roof, with their eyes raised toward the statue of the Virgin which is at the end of the

choir, high up on the wall, lighted by two windows, and robed in violet velvet. Their lips moved a little. What did they say? Nobody knows. But a short prayer had scarcely risen from their hearts when Pierre saw Mademoiselle de Clairepée turn toward him, and simply, largely, like those who give their word and their heart forever, hold out her hand to him.

"I am yours," she said.

Madame Ehrsam had seen Marie's gesture. She remained in the church long enough to give thanks and to recover half of her self-possession. Then she went out first and said, as she looked toward Masevaux:

"Let my sons go, then. and may France come back to us!"

Enveloped in the growing darkness they all three went down. He who was going to resume his place among his companions in arms, and she who would be to-morrow on the road to Provence, held each other's hands. The mother walked alone, thinking. There was one more promise in the world. The war went on.

THE END